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THE SEEN AND UNSEEN: RELIGION AND IDENTITY IN THE CHICAGO  
AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY

By

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Dissertation

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy  
in Anthropology

The University of Montana  
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May 2011

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ABSTRACT:

Suzukovich III, Eli, PhD., May, 2010

Anthropology

*The Seen and Unseen: Religion and Identity in the Chicago American Indian Community*

Chairperson: Richard Sattler, PhD.

The following dissertation is an ethnographic community study focusing on religiosity and its relationship in maintaining tribal identity among urban Indians living in Chicago, Illinois. The research examines spirituality and religious practice in an urban Indian community and illuminates and examines how people conceptualize the sacred and how it applies to their sense of tribal, familial, and individual identities and its development through a lifetime. The goals of this research are to: 1) provide an overview of religiosity as it currently exists within the American Indian community of Chicago; and 2) examine religion and spirituality as it develops over time utilizing an inter-generational perspective to gain insight into this process.

The research approaches religion and spirituality as an aspect of ethnic or group identity and its role in maintaining tribal identity. The goal of this approach is to illuminate the nature of religion; its existence in the daily lives of community members; how it maintains tribal ethnic identity; its manifestations within community relations and the urban landscape; and how it links multiple generations, along with reservation and urban communities.

This dissertation provides an account of religious views and beliefs in the Chicago American Indian community through the examination of current religious beliefs and practices and their relationships to the maintenance of tribal identity in a multi-tribal community. Most importantly, it reveals American Indian concepts of spirituality and ceremonialism within an urban Indian community from a community perspective.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

This dissertation is dedicated to the late Mila Smith, Marcus Zimmerman, Robert Miller, Peggy Desjarlait, E. Donald Two Rivers, Ronald Jordan Sr., and Jeanne La Traile who passed away during my fieldwork. Their perspectives, humor, and support influenced this research tremendously. They are dear people who will be missed.

I would like to thank my committee, Drs. Richard Sattler, Gregory R. Campbell, Kelly Dixon, David R. M. Beck, and Richmond Clow. Their advice, encouragement, and the knowledge they passed on to me not only helped me write this dissertation, but also to be a better anthropologist, researcher, and person.

I would especially like to thank my family, especially, my mother Louise and my dad Eli, for all of their love, support, and encouragement throughout my graduate career. Thank you to my cousin Robert Peltier and his family for making Missoula a home and being there through good and tough times.

I would like to thank the participants of this research, without whom, this research could not have been possible. Along with the participants, a thank you goes out to the greater Chicago American Indian community members and organizations for their support, guidance, and encouragement. A final thank you goes to my friends and colleagues, including Dr. Wade Davies, Dr. Angelica Lawson, Dr. Clint Carol, Dr. Megan Bang, Bob Criswell, John Watkins, and Sean Eshelman.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **The Seen and Unseen World of Urban Indian Identity and the Sacred**

The following is an ethnographic community study of religiosity and its relationship with ethnic identity among urban Indians living in Chicago, Illinois. This research examines spirituality and religious practice in an urban Indian community, specifically the Chicago American Indian community. It illuminates and explores how people conceptualize the sacred and how it applies to their sense of tribal and individual identities and their development through a lifetime.

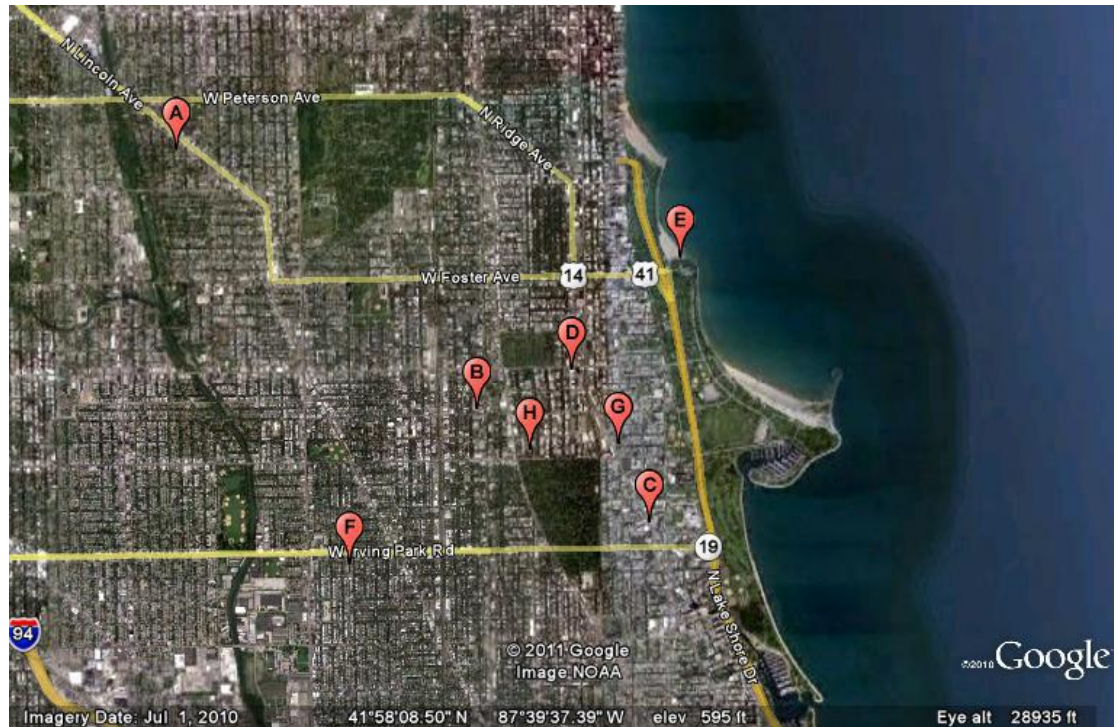
Spirituality and religion within the context of this research follows the theoretical perspective of Hans Mol, who did not treat religion and spirituality as individual phenomena but instead as an interconnected aspect of ethnic and individual identity. The theoretical approaches of the Manchester School and Fredrik Barth provide a basis for understanding the formation of group identity and its transmission over time. Most importantly, these systematic approaches focus on the interactions between groups of people; the idea that group identity forms in the presence of another group. These social transactions between groups affect each other in different ways from reinforcing and maintaining core beliefs to adapting and evolving as needed. There is both continuity and flexibility that exists within identity, ethnic or otherwise, which is important in terms of adapting to external pressures, new geographical and social landscapes, economic flux, or political change. For urban Indian communities, cultural adaptations and maintaining core values and beliefs becomes a necessity to maintain the various and distinct tribal



identities, and simultaneously maintain a larger, urban community identity. For this reason, the Chicago American Indian was a perfect choice.

The community is one of the oldest urban Indian communities in the United States and has maintained a permanent Native population even after the Pottawatomie land cessions and removal of the 1830s. Despite removal, there were Native people and stayed in Chicago, alongside others from other parts of the U.S. and Canada. Thus, the community maintains both local and non-local tribal groups. This facet alone makes the Chicago American Indian community unique from other ethnic communities in Chicago, in that it is a community of different tribes who form an ethnic conglomerate on a city level, but still maintains individual tribal identity on family and individual levels. For the Chicago community, religiosity and tribal concepts of the sacred bind both aspects across the community and between families and individuals. It is not one or two specific religions that bind the community, but a sense and conceptualization of the sacred that allows people to maintain their own sense of tribal identity and the sacred and participate with other community members from different tribes and/or belief systems. Tribal identity and the sacred are constantly influenced and shaped by life in the city, the diversity of tribes, and the exposure to other ethnic groups and enclaves. However, it is this exposure to other tribes and ethnic groups that also reinforces tribal identities, namely through sacred beliefs and practices. Map 1 illustrates the location and distribution of American Indian community organizations and sites used for public ceremonies.

**Map 1: Distribution of American Indian Community Organizations and Selected Sites Mentioned in the Dissertation.**



- A= American Indian Association of Illinois
- B= American Indian Center of Chicago, Inc.
- C= American Indian Health Services
- D=ANAWIM
- E= Foster Beach
- F= Kateri Center of Chicago
- G= St. Augustine's Center for the American Indian
- H= Title VII Indian Education Program, Stockton Elementary School

### **Research Goals and Theory:**

The focus of this research is two-fold. The first is to provide an overview of religiosity as it currently exists within the American Indian community of Chicago. This includes historical background (1940s to present), current belief systems and practices,

and personal perspectives of the sacred. The second is to examine religion and spirituality as it develops over time. The research utilized an inter-generational perspective to gain insight into this process. Religion and spirituality exists as dynamic phenomena, which mitigates continuity and change in terms of tribal and individual identity, when examining this process over a “communal life-time.”

The communal life-time refers to the interactions individual community members and families have with others within and outside of the community and how this shapes a larger community identity. While people maintain their distinct tribal, familial, and spiritual traditions and beliefs, there are moments when community members gather regardless of tribe or beliefs. Sacred identity, both individual and communal can initiate social and cultural interactions and binds community members from different tribes and belief systems. Events such as Sunrise and Pipe ceremonies, funerals and drum feasts, or joint masses between Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, cross the boundaries of individual, family, tribe, or belief and unite people as an urban Indian community; a community that shares a common experience of living and working in Chicago and maintaining their distinct ethnic identities, cultures, and traditions. All of this however developed over time as Native Peoples from different tribes, either those who moved to Chicago or were long time residents, began living and socializing with each other. The urban experience, which was thought to erode tribal and eventually Native identity, in many ways reinforced people’s sense of ethnic distinctness. In Chicago, the urban experience facilitated the learning about other tribes who shared similar political, economic, social, and cultural experiences. In many ways, the American Indian community of Chicago represents an ethnic enclave more than a single ethnic group.

What was found in this research was that political social movements played some role in developing a greater sense of community, however, it is the experience with the sacred aspects of tribal and Native identity that maintains stronger bonds between those of the same tribe or tradition and on a community wide level.

This choice in topic arose due to the lack of specific studies of religiosity and its relationship to maintaining tribal and community identities. Urban Indian studies, have rarely examined religion and spirituality on their own terms nor has there been a focused study on religiosity or its relationship to tribal identity within an urban context. Instead, religion and spirituality usually appears in the context of community gatherings, social service organizations, kinship and social roles, or discussions about assimilating into the mainstream. Even these however do not cover the full scope of religiosity in these communities, nor do they discuss the role it plays in maintaining tribal and Native identity (let alone an urban Indian identity). Discussions of religion in urban Indian communities is generally relegated to Christian denominations, Native American Church, or public prayer activities, basically visible phenomena that fit a standard format of what is perceived as religion; a tangible and quantifiable entity. In this same sense, discussions of tribal identity tend to lack a deeper understanding of its sacred aspects. In many ways the previous approaches reflect a larger Western theoretical perspective regarding religion and identity.

Religion within the Western paradigm often exists as the mysterious “other,” separated from the secular side of identity and given its own category outside of ethnic identity (this has been changing in the past twenty years as systematic approaches have filtered into modern studies of religion and spirituality). This otherness becomes

compartmentalized, reduced, and examined in a void and has been the primary way in which scholars have studied religion up until the mid twentieth century. However, for Native Peoples, religion and spirituality exists hand in hand with other aspects of identity, and at varying levels. This may be because spirituality and religion exist as active understandings of the world. It becomes one of many cultural sub-structures that contribute to the foundation of ethnic and individual identity.

The terms ethnic and individual identity frequently appear within this research. Both terms on their own represent separate contexts but are inter-related. All ethnic groups are composed of individuals and all individuals are part of some group. Both identities develop and evolve through time, albeit on their own levels. However, these separate experiences ultimately contribute to each other's larger development. They become dynamic and fluid forces or motivators that assist people in navigating changing physical and philosophical environments.

This dissertation approaches religion and spirituality as an aspect of ethnic or group identity and its role in maintaining tribal identity. The goal of this approach is to illuminate the nature of religion, and how it exists in the daily lives of community members, how it maintains tribal ethnic identity, how it manifests itself in community relations and the urban landscape, how it links generations together, and connects reservation and urban communities. This community study is important because it will add to the existing body of research on urban Indians and communities. It will also provide a unique perspective of community life as seen through the lens of religion, spirituality, and ceremonialism. This dissertation will fill a gap in contemporary urban Indian research in regards to urban Indian religiosity and cultural continuity, and examine

religion not as a noun or inert object, but as a verb, an active phenomenon.

Spirituality and religion are dynamic phenomena that play an important role in the formation and maintenance of identity. Religion and spirituality are in essence the sacred aspects of identity. The sacred in terms of identity are the aspects and components of group and individual identity that forms the foundation of group, and consequently the individual. These core components fit into a larger framework of group cosmology or world view. The sacred can be described best as a strong sense of connection and relationship to unseen forces, an omnipotent being or force, or, in a broader sense, to core ideas and values, and a sense of deep kinship to ones ancestors and one's origins (whatever those origins may be). In times of change and transition, the sacred aspects of group identity manifest themselves as a way to mitigate a changing world. The sacred aspects of identity have a relationship to the secular and material aspects of identity. The sacred holds acts as the store house or battery, the potential energy that energizes the secular and allows groups and individuals to adapt to new social contexts.

As a community study, this research provides an introductory look into the sacred life of the Chicago American Indian community, and is not comprehensive in terms of specific details of sacred events or all the perspectives and ideas within the community. There were events and experiences edited out to keep on the focus of this research, respect for people's beliefs, and for the sake of brevity. What can be said is that religiosity within the community is incredibly diverse and many belief systems, both traditional and Christian are deserving of their own specific research and focus. There were also community members who were not formally interviewed due to time constraints and availability; however, their perspectives were included within this work at

their requests. The goal of the author is that the reader becomes familiar with the diverse and common concepts of tribal, communal, and individual identities and the role of the sacred in maintaining that identity.

### **Terms and Definitions:**

This section will cover some of the terminology and introduce the theoretical perspective utilized throughout the dissertation. The relationship between ethnic identity and spirituality in the Chicago American Indian community will follow a Transactionalist theoretical approach by examining religion and spirituality as a boundary mechanism, which regulates innovation and conservation of ethnic identity and as an adaptive/coping mechanism in response to external pressures. In Chapters 2 and 3, this theoretical approach and its application within an urban Indian context is explained further. The following are summary definitions of ethnic identity, religion, and spirituality as utilized within the research. There is however a term that encompasses ethnicity, religion, spirituality. The terms tradition/ traditional are utilized throughout this dissertation. This term refers to a large body of practices, beliefs, concepts, events, and history, intricately woven into a group's identity. Tradition is a changing, inherited, collective body of cognitive and physical representations shared by a group (Vansina, 1985:259). Tradition is an unbroken line that links a current generation to the concepts, history, events, values, and practices to previous living generations and their ancestors. Simultaneously, it creates a foundation for future generations to build on. Tradition both maintains a practice or concept, and creates space for new traditions in response to the current needs of the group, family, or individual.

*Ethnicity:*

Ethnic identity is a complex system of dynamic relationships to material (seen) and abstract (unseen) forces. The material aspects consist of physical forces such as environment, economy/subsistence, political, and social relationships that influence how people and groups relate to the world around them. Ethnic identity in essence is a group of relationships between groups of people. Ethnic identity forms around something, some basis or reason why people make a conscious decision or choice to come together. Reasons for this can vary from maximizing subsistence, a network of mutual support, protection, or some other type of mutual interest. These relationships can be temporary or long term and they can go through a series of fissions and fractioning events. Ethnic identity is fluid and dynamic in its external aspects. Political, economic, and social relationships, behaviors, and practices can and need to adapt to new contexts and situations that are placed on the group (and subsequently the individuals who make up the group). But change and adaptations to external features does not necessarily change the core identity of the group and its individuals. While external features may change or transform, the internal workings of group identity change at a slower, more methodical pace.

While the external structures of ethnic identity are material and physically based, the composition of the internal are more abstract. If one looks at the external structures as “action” then the internal mechanics of ethnicity would be “potential.” The abstract consists of guiding philosophies, core values, and cosmologies that help people adapt and problem solve as external, material forces impact their lives. They also define who the



group is and what makes them unique from other groups. These group conceptions often exist within kinship and spiritual structures, and influence how people make important decisions and strategies regarding group cohesion and maintenance. The abstract structures of identity are the mechanism that filter new information and assists its integration into the existing system of identity. Through core ideas and values, a group maintains control over itself by choosing what it wants to add or not. Choice is important. If the group decides what changes occur and how they happen, these changes and adaptations have more legitimacy and incorporate into the group consciousness. Forced changes imposed upon the group by another will not have the authenticity to maintain it over successive generations. Through abstract concepts of self and cosmology, a core foundation of ideas and systems of belief form, creating the basis of group identity, and is maintained over time. This foundation also becomes an incubator for traditions or a sense of tradition that embodies concepts, beliefs, ideas, and events that link past and future generations through a common history and lived experience.

So how does spirituality and religion affect ethnic identity? Both are abstract concepts situated within the sacred aspect of identity that operate as adaptive mechanisms in that they contain the important and vital aspects to a group's foundation. These are the beliefs and practices that a group can turn to help mitigate external pressures during times of flux and change.

#### *Religion and Spirituality:*

Religion is a physical/visible manifestation of the sacred aspects of an individual and group identity, while spirituality encompasses the abstract/philosophical concepts

and basis of core group identity. Religion is one component within a larger system of cultural identity that includes, but is not limited to, spirituality, belief, ethics, cosmology, values, and core cultural structures enacted within a sacred context. Essential religion is the active component of sacred identity while spirituality is the conceptual component. Religion is the communal and/or public expression of a group's sacred ideas and perspectives. Conversely, spirituality is more internal and individual. However, sacred identity is not fixed or immutable. What exists as sacred or secular can vary depending on the social, political, geographical, and kinship contexts the group is currently experiencing. What is sacred at one point can become secular and vice versa.

Religion has an interesting nature because it spans both the sacred and secular aspects of identity. Religion's material nature provides a window into a group's or individual's vision of the world and how that perspective exists in the daily lives of the group. The abstract made real. While this implementation's focus is on things of a sacred nature, it can easily cross into the political and economic spheres. Thus there can be a religion centered on a particular deity, on an idea or philosophy (Buddhism or Atheism), or political philosophy (Soviet Communism or Americanism). The basis of religion is the physical manifestation or practice of a belief or conception of the world, whether secular or sacred. From this perspective, it becomes easier to see what a group or individual sees as sacred, namely the basis of their identity and perception of the world and universe around them. This later perspective is something that arose within this research, both from data analysis and literature review, however, this definition is one of many and based on previous research on this topic.

Defining what religion is and where it comes from has been the focus of many early founders of anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Early definitions sought to uncover the origins of religious thought and institutions. This focus then switched seeking the answers to religion's conception through a categorical examination of religious phenomena. Most importantly, a definition of religion characterizes what constitutes a religion is and is necessary in the research of and an understanding of religious behavior (Smart, 1973:14). The definition guides the research as to what phenomena and events are important and defining features of the group of beliefs system, which can be problematic. Evans-Pritchard noted that:

“Statements about a people's religious beliefs must always be treated with the greatest caution, for we are then dealing with what neither European nor native can directly observe, with conceptions, images, words which require for the understanding a through knowledge of a people's language and also an awareness of the entire system of ideas of which any particular belief is part, for it may be meaningless when divorced from the set of beliefs and practices from which it belongs (Bowie, 2000:21).”

Definitions of religion and the sacred are deeply connected to an individual's and group's psyche and foundation; one should keep this in mind when examining the beliefs of an individual or group (Evans-Pritchard, 1937). Clyde Kluckhohn noted that:

“...Because religious beliefs and practices, learned so early in the contexts intimately associated with the most intense humans experiences, are the targets of strong positive and negative feelings on part of the participants and the observers and because religion embraces such a wide and such a complex area of human life, the scientific study of religion is difficult (Kluckhohn, 1979:vi).”

Like Kluckhohn, Arthur Lehmann and James Myers offered a definition that also pushed for a broad definition and noted that:

“Expanding the definition of religion beyond spiritual and superhuman beings to include the extraordinary, the mysterious, and unexplainable allows a more comprehensive view of religious behaviors among the peoples of the world and

permits the anthropological investigation of phenomena such as magic, sorcery, curses, and other practices that hold meaning for both preliterate and literate societies (Lehmann and Myers, 1997:3).”

Ninian Smart expands on this by stating:

“A religion, or the religion of a group, is a set of institutionalized rituals identified in a tradition and expressing and/or evoking sacral sentiments directed at a divine or trans-divine focus seen in the context of the human phenomenological environment and at least partially described by myths or myth doctrines (Smart, 1973:15).”

Hans Mol simply defines religion as the sacralization of identity (making aspects of identity sacred or having a deep, core significance), but notes and links religion to human identity, which is a complex system in a constant state of stability and flux (Mol, 1976:1).

Frederick Max Müller in 1873 noted that:

“Religion is a mental faculty or disposition which...enables man to apprehend the Infinites under different names and different disguises. With that faculty, no religion, not even the lowest worship of idols and fetishes, would be possible; and if we will but listen attentively, we can hear in all religions a groaning of the spirit, a struggle to conceive the inconceivable, to utter the unutterable, a longing after the infinite (Durkheim, 1975:76).”

Müller’s definition is that it is a phenomenon intrinsic to all humans. As Müller saw it, primitive religion laid the foundation on which human civilization could develop, but that the religious experience is the same regardless of cultural or social status. Müller further saw religion as dynamic and able to evolve through time (Bowie, 2000:19). His definition upholds the idea that religion and spirituality originated from the need by humans to transcend the mundane, to venture into the unseen and touch the intangible universe. During the time in which he created his definition of religion (1870s), and unlike his contemporaries, Müller placed religion and spirituality outside of contemporary Western-

Christian thought and in theory paves the way for later systematic perspectives of Van der Leuw, Smart, Mol, the Manchester School, and contemporary Neuro-scientists. Because it is something that exists within the human psyche and while it will change shape through time and experience, it is always present and affects how humans live their lives and how they define their identity and perceptions of the world.

Religion is a phenomenon that is both abstract and material. This of course makes it difficult to examine in a narrowly focused study. In many ways the words of Paul Radin can ring true when researching religious phenomena, as he noted, “religion comes from life and is directed towards life and in itself it is nothing (Glazier, 1997:7-8).” Radin’s comment speaks to the complexities encountered within the study of religion. Examining religious phenomena, behaviors, and patterns in a transactional framework permits the researcher to look for specific elements of belief and experience while understanding them in the context of the whole belief system of a group. Within the discussion and study of religion, and its behaviors and concepts, definitions require a focused approach, with some degree of flexibility to account for cultural and individual contexts. The focused part allocates the researcher to view an individual or group belief system in the context of other cultures and the flexibility allows uniqueness in thought or in practice. In this way, one can see how and where patterns of belief fit into the grand scheme of human society and being. It may also become more apparent how and why religious or spiritual traditions remain continuous and their function as adaptive mechanisms may become apparent.

With this said, one can view religion as the tangible, structural, and seen aspect of sacred identity, and spirituality as the conceptual and cosmological system that

establishes, maintains, and restores order in people's lives. It establishes the boundaries between order and chaos. It helps bind both individuals and groups together with the seen and unseen world around them. Both spirituality and religion provide a conceptual framework of personal and social relationships. As a cosmological system, religion allows an individual or group to find or know their place and purpose in the world amidst a complex of seen and unseen forces. In times of socio-political instability or fluctuation, religion can establish a focal point to which people can refer to in order to maintain identity and/or find innovation as their world changes. This definition is not fool proof but it is attempting to be broad enough to account for the complexity of the human condition. Religion is a broad system of order enacted in the everyday life of people with their social, cultural, ecological, and political environments. Religion and spirituality allows people and groups to transcend the material world, but also provides for them the structure to which a cognitive map of their society and the larger world around them operates.

### *Spirituality:*

Current conceptions of spirituality and religiousness are varied and diverse as definitions of religion (Zinnbauer et al, 1997:549; Dyson et al, 1997; George et al, 2000; McSherry and Cash, 2004; Hill et al, 2000). A broad definition of spirituality is a transcendence of the mundane on an emotional level and growth and development on a personal level. Its personal nature in some respects allows it to be flexible and fluid. Accessing the sacred on an individual level places a person where they can maintain the

tenets of group belief and identity, while simultaneously questioning and adapting to new opportunities and social contexts and their implementation within the

Spirituality has been variously defined by theorists as "the human response to God's gracious call to a relationship with himself; "a subjective experience of the sacred," and "that vast realm of human potential dealing with ultimate purposes, with higher entities, with God, with love, with compassion, with purpose"(Tart 1983: 4) (Zinnbauer et al, 1997:550). Historically, the use of the terms spirituality and religion are interchangeable in their cultural meanings (Zinnbauer et al, 1997:550; George et al, 2000:103). Mitroff in his study of spirituality within the workplace noted some common definitions related to him in his study. He notes that:

“Unlike religion which has structure and formality, spirituality transcends organizational and formal structures of religion. It is non-denominational and inclusive; it transcends time and absolute definitions; it provides people with a sense of meaning and purpose; it provides an expression of awe in the presence of Power (whatever it may be considered); a deep feeling of interconnectedness, inner peace and calm; and an inexhaustible source of will power, belief and faith (Mitroff, 2003:378-381).”

However, both terms can mean two different things. Currently, philosophers and social scientists have examined the differences between the two. Spirituality may or may not include the involvement in organized religion and unlike religion is more of a personal experience or transcendence (Miller and Martin, 1988: 14). If one looks at religion as the physical aspect, an active system of order, then spirituality exists as the abstract and ideal. Religion focuses more on community ethic and external expression, whereas spirituality focuses more on the individual and internal growth (Dyson et al, 1997:1184). Religion's exclusivity, rigid structures, and rules can be dispiriting to people and have a negative effect on an individual's personal growth (Dyson et al, 1997:1184).

However, religious activity can keep spiritual ideas and values relevant to individuals and groups. George et al provides a fluid discussion regarding the relationship between religions and spirituality.

“The major difference is that religion is viewed as being linked to formal religious institutions, whereas spirituality does not depend on collective or institutional context. As Pargament points out, the most disturbing element of this distinction is that it can lead to artificial and inaccurate separation between institutions and individuals. Although religious participation often occurs in religious institutions, religiousness is not confined to institutional settings. Nor do religious institutions typically preclude individualized religious expression- in fact they usually encourage it (George et al, 2000:103).”

This quote in many summarizes religion and spirituality within the Chicago American Indian community. Participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews spoke about religion and spirituality from a personal perspective. While some maintained a connection to a religious institution such as the Long House Religion, Native American Church, Midéwiwin, Christianity, Big Drum, and Islam, they also maintained their own unique perspectives of religion and spirituality, based on their life experiences. In many ways, the participants provided a more spiritual side of the sacred and the complexity that comes with it. The spiritual experience in the Chicago American Indian community links individuals to tribal and non-tribal institutions and simultaneously to internal preferences and choices as to what those institutions mean to their identity as a whole. Ultimately, if their personal choices and experiences allow them to grow as individuals, it also adds to the existing body of religious and spiritual belief and practice. Spirituality provides the medium in which one can maintain the core values and institutions of their tribe and simultaneously explore new paths and perspectives. This exploration in sum increases one’s knowledge of self and the world around them. Furthermore it contributes to the



greater body of belief and experience with the sacred, especially when passed on to subsequent generations.

### **Chapter Descriptions:**

Chapter 1 discusses ethnic identity and its relationship to religion from larger theoretical perspectives, namely Transactionalism and Sacralized Identity. This chapter focuses on differing perspectives of ethnic identity and their influence on Transactionalist theory and its applications to rural and urban community studies. From there, the theories and ideas of Hans Mol and subsequent researchers will further extrapolate on the relationship between religion and ethnic identity. Chapter 2 will continue the theoretical discussion from Chapter 1 in the context of urban Indians and other urban ethnic enclaves and Native identity on a national level. The chapter will provide an overview of the history of the Chicago American Indian community, the development and role of community organizations in maintaining tribal and Native identity and traditions, and ritual and ceremonial nodes that currently exist within the community. Both Chapters 1 and 2 demonstrates the relationship between religion and ethnic identity within various ethnic groups; and how they function and evolve to meet the demands of external pressures and internal paradigm shifts. Chapter 3 examines the data gathered from the interviews and surveys. This will include discussions on qualitative methods; issues associated with collecting data; and examine the relationship between survey and interview data. The examination of this relationship will continue in Chapter 4.

The focus of Chapter 4 is to present a more focused discussion on the community experience of the sacred through public ceremonies and events from the survey and

interview data. This chapter discusses some common belief systems and their affects and influences on a larger community-wide sense of the sacred and identity. It will discuss the points of intersection and interaction between the various tribal and family nodes that exist within the community. Conversely, Chapter 5's focus is on the development of sacred and Native identity on the personal level. Utilizing the data gathered from the structured interviews, this chapter will examine how sacred and tribal identity develops over time, as experienced by different age cohorts. This discussion includes the influence of life experiences and the role of family and community members on this process.

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **RELIGION AND IDENTITY**

The theoretical perspective for this dissertation will follow a Transactionalist perspective, meaning that religion and spirituality are examined as important aspects of ethnic and individual identity. Ethnicity and spirituality will be examined as a product of various social interactions between groups, the boundaries they develop that allow each group to differentiate themselves from others, and the internal mechanisms they maintain to preserve group identity. These interactions help define the group and their relationships to each other as individuals and as a group to the rest of the world. When faced with external pressures and internal flux, religion and spirituality play an important role in maintaining ethnic identity and operate as adaptive mechanisms. However, before a discussion can begin about this perspective, it would be wise to explain some of the other theories associated with ethnicity. To understand the theoretical basis of this research, the following section will highlight this evolution in ethnicity theory and provide a background to understanding the role spirituality plays in developing identity.

The anthropological study of religion and ethnicity began in the late nineteenth century and with a focus on its place in the social evolution of humankind and its specific origins. Views of religion would change as new theories and ideas arose. By the 1950s, Secularization Theory began to take root in the minds of many social scientists and so the research emphasis on religion and the sacred began to wane. The dominant idea and theories of the time assumed religious identity would disappear and be replaced by a modern secular ideology. In terms of ethnic identity, Social scientists began proposing theories of ethnic identity that strayed from the mainstream notions of biological

determinism and eugenics, to theories that demonstrated ethnic and racial identities as abstract human constructs. While beginning with Boas as a response to Nazi-ism in Europe, the perspectives of Fredrik Barth and Gunnar Myrdahl in the late 1940s and early 1950s would begin to change scientific notions of self and group identity, away from simple biological determinism to a larger focus on cognition. Nevertheless, it a logical first step to see how their ideas developed.

### **Theories of Ethnicity:**

In many respects ethnicity is old, but the term in its current usage within the political and social sciences is relatively new (Glazier and Moynihan, 1975:1). There is no widely agreed upon definition of ethnic identity is indicative of the confusion surrounding the topic (Trimble and Dickson, 2005:1). Some perspectives view ethnicity as the sum total of its individual members (Cohen, 1974:xiii; Ellis, 1999:141). Others see it as membership within a group defined by its members and other groups (Horowitz, 1975:113, Epstein, 1978). Trimble and Dickson note that

“Typically, ethnic identity is an affinitive construct, where an individual is viewed by themselves and by others as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group. An individual can choose to associate with a group especially if other choices are available (i.e., the person is of mixed ethnic or racial heritage). Affiliation can be influenced by racial, natal, symbolic, and cultural factors (Cheung, 1993). Racial factors involve the use of physiognomic and physical characteristics, natal factors refer to "homeland" (ancestral home) or origins of individuals, their parents and kin, and symbolic factors include those factors that typify or exemplify an ethnic group (e.g., holidays, foods, clothing, artifacts, etc.). Symbolic ethnic identity usually implies that individuals choose their identity; however to some extent the cultural elements of the ethnic or racial group have a modest influence on their behavior (Kivisto & Nefzger, 1993) (Trimble and Dickson, 2005:1).”

Trimble and Dickson's summary is also reflected by other scholars such as: DeVos, 1995; Romanucci-Ross and DeVos, 1995: 24-26; Eriksen, 2002; Spencer, 2006; Fenton, 1999; Dashefsky, 1976; Peterson-Royce, 1982; Reminick, 1983; Glazier and Moynihan, 1975; Smith, 1989; and Abrahamson, 1971. Ethnicity is a complex of varying degrees of identification at various points in time, experience, and situation. The result of this is the creation of multiple theories to explain the various manifestations of ethnic identity.

Definitions of ethnic identity are dependent on the underlying theory embraced by researchers and scholars intent on resolving its conceptual meanings (Trimble and Dickson, 2005:1). Some theoretical families view ethnicity as a product of biological imperatives, as seen in Primordial, Constructionist, and Instrumentalist theories. Others see ethnicity as a product of economic, historical, political, or power needs and processes and is typically found in, Marxist, Neo-Marxist, and Post-Modernist paradigms. A third option views ethnicity as a product of the inter-personal relationships and situational transactions between different groups known as Transactionalist, Symbolic Interactionist, and Ethno-genetic perspectives. The following are summaries of such theories.

*Primordialism, Instrumentalism, and Constructionism Theory:*

Primordialism is primarily the driving force in Sociobiology and evolutionary psychology and situates ethnic identity and ethnicity in terms of biological imperatives centered on population fitness (Ambrosio, 2002:98; Spencer, 2006:76-77; James and Goetze, 2001:116-117; Nash, 1989:4-6; Van den Bergh, 1981). Within the sphere of Primordialism, ethnicity acts as a kin-selection tool for groups to find viable mates. The formations of ethnic groups are a product of an unseen biological force that drives

humans to preserve their genes by forming deep social bonds with others deemed “fit”. Affinities that can vary from phenotypic expression to common beliefs of religion and language provide the foundation for social bonds. Altruism then becomes the prime objective of human existence and kin selection. This altruism becomes the motivating factor in the creation of ethnic bonds that are based on kinship and kin selection, and that ethnic groups are endogamous super-families of individuals who share common traits both cultural and biological (Smith, 1998:147; Van den Bergh, 1981). This branch of Primordialism has met considerable criticism from biologists, especially for its assumptions for biological determinism, along with other similarities to Social Darwinism (Spencer, 2006:77).

Another type of Primordialism that exists focuses less on biologically determined behavior and more on primal factors. The proponents of this view of Primordialism are Geertz (1973), Schiffman (1998), Bentley (1987), DeVos (1995), and van de Bergh (1981). Primal factors are a set of deeply entrenched cultural affinities that have a distant origin and are vital to the formation ethnic bonds (Spencer, 2006:79). In this case, primal factors include language, religion, region, and relations to landscape. Primordialists see these bonds as a-priori, ineffable, and affective bonds (Eriksen, 2002:77; Geertz, 1973). The relationships of these primal factors are so in-grained within in a culture, that without them the ethnic identity of a group is in danger of extinction (Schiffman, 1998). These primal factors are attached to the emotional and sentimental attitudes regarding the similarities of the group and differences outside of the group; the causality originating from inherent, atavistic human behavior or hard-wiring (Jones, 1997:82-83). This theory is generally employed to explain ethnic conflicts and feuds that seem to suddenly appear,

attributing them to primal tribalism and competition (Ambrosio, 2002:98-99; Spencer, 2006:77).

Following a similar pattern of behavior based theory, Instrumentalist and Constructionist theories seek to explain ethnic formation in terms of economic and political competition as survival and fitness mechanisms. Instrumentalism views the formation of ethnic groups as strategies employed to attain individual or collective goals (Ambrosio, 2002:98-99; Spencer, 2006:78; Smith, 1998). Constructionism goes one step further and notes that ethnic groups are the product of goals and needs individual elites (Ambrosio, 2002:98). These elites manufacture or construct ethnic identities to maintain control over the collective group. These theories differ from Primordialism in that identity is the product of survival strategies. Both Instrumentalist and Constructionists view ethnicity in terms of political development and strategy (Eriksen, 2002:55, Cohen, 1978).

In the current literature, both forms of Primordialism, alongside Instrumentalism, and Constructionism, provides a theoretical framework in understanding the roots of ethnic conflict. From the literature, there is a central drive to find the biological origins of ethnic conflict. The total of their research points that ethnic conflict arise due to deeply entrenched hatreds that have existed from an ancient age. The conflicts widely cited are the conflicts in Bosnia, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, Somalia, Chechnya, Abkhazia, Sudan, and the rise of Black Nationalism in the US (Ambrosio, 2002; Isaacs, 1975; Van den Bergh, 1981; Reminick, 1983; James and Goetze, 2001). The persisting belief is that ethnic conflict, whether explained in terms of biological fitness or atavistic sentiments are the primary factors of these conflicts. Ethnic conflicts and sudden upsurges of ethnic

revitalization reduced to biological survival traits. Primordialism, whether socio-biological or sentimental, assumes ethnic identity and ethnicity to be immutable and static, thus conflicts arise due to a sort of genetic memory. These theories in many respects lack any acknowledgement for human agency and assume human behavior is immutable, with little to no innovations or adaptive cultural mechanisms. In the case of the Primordial origins of “ethnic conflict,” research in these hot spots has found that much of the fighting is recent and is based not on ethnic divisions but on political and economic power and production issues (Horowitz, 1975:139-140; Juda, 1996; Banac, 1984; Gagnon, 2004). The ineffable nature of ethnic bonds connected to circumstances and affectivity implies a mystical emotion or belief, which is based on little to no evidence (Eriksen, 2002:78). Sociobiology has also been criticized for its assumption that behavior traits are inherited genetically and behavioral disorders are determined by genetics (Mizrach, 2008). Constructionism and Instrumentalism has been criticized for a lack of explanation for ethnic durability and its assumption that ethnic identity is politically motivated (Eriksen, 2002:54-56). Pettigrew notes that

“Ethnic solidarity for the advancement of group aims is in general a two-edged sword... While in the short run it is often an advantage for individuals to emphasize minority solidarity; it frequently works in the long run as a disadvantage for the group as a whole (Pettigrew, 1976:18).”

Thus what many Primordialists, Constructionists, and Instrumentalists view as biological imperatives and atavistic sentiments, are for the most part temporary social, political, and economic alliances. When the situational context changes, these alliances will dissolve as they are no longer an advantage. However, these alliances may produce a longstanding



collective identity among the different players, but there needs to be more substance than simple biological functions for long standing collective group cohesion.

*Marxist Perspectives:*

From a Marxist and Neo-Marxist perspective, ethnicity is one of many elements that make up a collective group identity. While Primordialism, Constructivism, and Instrumentalism favor ethnicity as a biologically produced and driven phenomenon, Marxist perspectives view ethnicity as a product of socio-political processes. Ethnicity, from this perspective, is simply a product generated purely from political and economic activities. While similar to Constructionists views that ethnicity is created to fulfill a need by one group at the expense of another, Marxism views this not as a biological response or survival mechanism, but instead as an abstract construct that can be utilized to establish social super-structures and substructures. Therefore, ethnic identity is not necessarily a biological manifestation but a temporary mechanism to maintain social, political, and economic control in relation to modes of production. The Hindu caste system is a good example, as it establishes different classes of people to perform specific functions within the greater society to maintain itself. A substructure of religious ideology maintains identity, both individual and group. Hinduism is a religion, ethnic and national identity, and socio-economic system all in one. In terms of production, religion can act as a regulatory institution that structures social relationships of a people to the land, product, themselves and their societies, and the world around them. For the Mandok, the epic of their trickster/creator sets the rules of how one is to gain status as a big man through social and economic manipulating, which maintained relations with

trade partners and constituted long term investment in human capital (Pomponio, 1992:43-47, 107). The Brahmans in Bali, maintain and dictate the distribution of water through ritual and ceremonial agencies, and control the production of rice and other crops (Lansing, 1991). The water temple system provides a structure that allows the equal distribution of water to farmers, dictates field rotation, and simultaneously creates a ceremonial complex to maintain this order. The water temple system offers an arrangement of social, political, and economic hierarchies that fit into the cosmology of the Balinese Hindu populace making the act of production into both an economic and sacred venture (Hefner, 1983:685-685; Lansing, 1991).

Ethnic identity is usually not a major focus of Marxist theory as ethnicity is viewed as a product of a people's subsistence or modes of production; the economic substructure. For many traditional Marxists, ethnicity, along with race and social class are mechanisms that categorically divide and subjugate a population for either control or exploitation. The common thread through Marxist and Neo-Marxist thought is that of haves and have-nots, or those who control access to economic production (Weber, 1976) and those who do not. Neo-Marxists such as Weber, Parsons, Gramsci, and Althusser explore ethnicity in finer detail. For Weber, ethnicity is a mechanism to stratify societies (Spencer, 2006:95). In a Weberian framework, ethnicity is not an independent variable, but connected to political mobilization and economic subjugation. In the same framework, Parsons views ethnicity as the core of group solidarity that creates and defines the collective identity (Parsons, 1975). Weber sought to find the deeper meanings of ethnicity and race and understand the motives and context of human action (Spencer, 2006:95; Weber, 1975). Differing from Weber, Structural Marxists like Gramsci and

Althusser viewed ethnicity and race as manufactured categories to exert a particular hegemony or ideological control (Spencer, 2006:90-95; Gramsci, 1963).

This goes further within Post-Modern theories of ethnicity, class, gender and race. Discourse theory in many ways reflects its Marxist origin, however ethnicity and race are seen from the perspective of the individual and not the collective group. For Post-Modernism, power struggles not created by economic production, but instead are the products of truth (Spencer, 2006:99). Governmental, legal and academic institutions are seen as having the power to raise some aspects of society into positions of power while lower others to a marginalized status through defining what is true (Spencer, 2006:99). Ethnicity and race are categories defined by those in power and used to marginalize others within society.

Critics of Marxist theory base their views on the fact that it does not directly deal with ethnicity, race, or gender (Belkhir, 1998; Spencer, 2006). However, this is not necessarily true. Ethnicity in Marxist terms is one component of the societal whole. Ethnicity, explored in macro terms, is examined in relation to economic, political, and historical forces and (Belkhir, 1998). Though traditional Marxism has been critiqued for its lack of focus on ethnicity, race, and gender, it should be noted that Marx's beliefs in social change as enacted through social conscious and collective action does in fact address these issues (Spencer, 2006:89; Belkhir, 1998). This idea of social conscious and collective action in regards to ethnic group formation opened the door to a new approach to ethnicity that questions biological determinism and illuminates ethnic identity as a complex system of relationships. Instead of group identity formation as the result of pure

biology examined in more detailed terms through Transactionalist and Symbolic Interactionist approaches.

### **Ethnic Identity and Religion:**

Transactionalism, Symbolic Interaction, and Ethnogenesis Theories analyze the formation of ethnicity in terms of group needs at a particular point in time and most importantly, the maintenance of ethno-cultural boundaries, which keeps group identity intact. Ethnicity and ethnic identity are socially constructed and that ethnicity is a product of social interactions of various groups (Spencer, 2006:166). In many ways, Transactionalism derives from previous theories about ethnicity and ethnic identity. For Transactionalists, ethnicity is a product of people's needs and their interactions with other groups. The needs, it should be mentioned can vary from simple close affinities, protection and support during conflict, economic activities, or religious practice. Ethnicity and ethnic identity appear as products of the communications and interactions between different groups (Spencer, 2006:166; Fenton, 1999:63; Stayman and Deshpande, 1989:361-362). Trimble and Dickson note that; "Ethnic identity is usually contextual and situational because it derives from social negotiations where one declares an ethnic identity and then demonstrates acceptable and acknowledged ethnic group markers to others (Trimble and Dickson, 2005:1)." Ethnic groups then create socio-cultural boundaries to aid in adapting to new external or objective social and cultural situations while insuring cultural continuity. The result is the creation of culture-bearing aspects or mechanisms of transmission, which solidify and preserve the identity of a group through time (Barth, 1969:12).

In a Transactional sense, ethnicity is a complex of categories that act as organizational vessels that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems and having a social function as far as organizing the group to meet social needs (Barth, 1969:14; Cohen, 1974:xii). In particular, Barth focuses his theory on the social interactions of various ethnic groups, how interactions with other groups affect conceptions of the ethnic self, and how these groups create boundaries and the function of boundaries in social transactions is stressed. The result is ethnic differentiation which facilitates interactions between groups that binds the group, allows for continuity, and sets up a boundary (Barth, 1969:13). Boundaries form a mechanism of difference markers and allow for the indexing of cultural behaviors (Nash, 1989:10-12). What makes us who we are, and what makes them who they are. Boundaries, as Barth perceives them, are a complex set of social behaviors and relationships, and that when multiple groups come together, boundaries create criteria for judgments and actions to be made (Barth, 1969:15). The group has then the mechanism to determine how fluid or solid the boundary can be depending on the degree social transactions that take place between two or more groups, and yet each maintain their distinct identities.

Another element of Transactionalist thought (of which is important in regards to the Chicago American Indian community) is that of poly-ethnic social systems. Poly-ethnic societies are formed by some binding factor such as the market place or unification under a larger governmental system that may stress mono-group identity in economic and political interactions, but allows large areas of diversity among the groups involved in terms of religious and domestic activities and ideas (Barth, 1969:16). This is important in regards to the Chicago American Indian community. It is a poly-ethnic society that from

the surface may seem mono-cultural, but on the subsurface level, is extremely diverse, especially in terms of tribal identity of which, the religious aspect or sacred identity plays an important role. Crucial to these interactions are the boundaries that each group sets. There is a function for these boundaries in how a group evolves through time. Barth states in regard to the construction of phyletic lines that

“This method presumes the existence of units where the boundaries and boundary maintaining processes can be described, and thus where continuity can be specified. Concretely, phyletic lines are meaningful because specific boundaries prevent the interchange of genetic material; so one can insist that the reproductive isolate is the unit, and that it has maintained an identity undisturbed by changes in the morphological characteristics of the species (Barth, 1969:37).”

Boundaries provide a checking mechanism to control the rate of mutation or change in ethnic group identity. They provide a vantage point for groups to determine what they want to change or not change in the midst of another group’s presence and the nature of the interactions. By examining the boundary-maintaining mechanisms of ethnic groups, one can see the mechanics of identity formation, continuity, and innovation. A definition of ethnicity becomes visible through the process of boundary-maintenance.

Barth’s work among the Swat Pathans of Pakistan identity bears many similarities to urban Indians in terms of maintaining tribal identities. The Pathans of Pakistan, who would move to urban areas and villages, where the dominant culture and language was not Pathan, would adopt the custom and language of the dominant group, but always maintained a distinct Pathan identity in terms of domestic structure, kinship, language, and religion (Barth, 1969; 1981). The Pathans (Pashtuns, Pakhtuns, also Afghans) are a large ethnic group living in Afghanistan and Western Pakistan (Barth, 1969:117), with a wide geographic range and made up of several regional sub-groups. They vary from

agriculturalists to pastoralists and some sub-groups have centralized institutions while others do not. Regardless, three factors are central to their ethnic identity: patrilineal descent, orthodox Islam, and Pathan custom (Barth, 1969:119). Pathan social organization at its base revolves around hospitality, the council, and seclusion (Barth, 1969:120-123). These three institutions allow the Pathan groups to be flexible but still maintain their identity. This is especially the case when Pathans move into Balouchi or Hazara dominated lands, villages, or urban areas.

For Epstein, ethnicity seems to be a function of interplay between external and internal perceptions and responses between two or more groups (Epstein, 1978:14). The crux of his question was that there was little attention given to how the participants saw themselves within the group, what personal choices in terms of ethnicity were made or considered, or how the crisis of ethnicity is experienced (Epstein, 1978:83). In the urban areas of the African Copper-Belt, tribalism was a major factor in ethnic identity, especially its formation and its persistence. Tribalism operates to provide people with a set of categories, which enable them to define the situations in which they find themselves and so adopt modes of behavior appropriate to the situation (Epstein, 1978:15). From these situations, people set up social categories and stereotypes as mechanisms to differentiate actors and groups from others. Stereotypes result from interactions and observation about the other and are formed due to fact that an observed act can have multiple meanings (Peterson-Royce, 1982:158). The crux of Epstein's argument is that as we define the "other", we concurrently define ourselves and strengthen our perspective of the world. Important to this study is that Epstein illuminates

the mechanisms that various ethnic communities use to transition and adapt to urban life, but also how they use these mechanisms to maintain cultural continuity.

In the urban centers of the African Copper-Belt, inter-tribal stereotyping helped the various tribal groups maintain their distinct identities within the mix of various tribes. Like urban Indians, the urban tribal groups of the Copper-Belt migrated into the cities for reasons of employment. In a similar manner to the American Indian Relocation Program, which attempted to assimilate Indians through urbanization, the British Colonial Authority maintained a policy to de-tribalize African groups and bring them under the authority of the crown. Through the urbanization of various tribal groups, the tribes were expected to meld into a single urban ethnic group, who could then become further assimilated into mainstream British society (Epstein, 1978:8-40). However, this did not happen. Epstein notes that in the African Copper-Belt where, despite colonial attempts to detribalize many African tribal groups by sending them into urban areas, ethnic tribal identity was strongly and fiercely maintained (Epstein, 1978). As members of various tribal groups such as Bembe, Lozi, and Lunda moved into the large industrial cities like Ndola, instead of mixing into the mainstream, they often congregated with members of their own tribes. Stereotyping other tribes became a major way of defining who others were within specific tribal terms, and simultaneously reinforcing their own tribal identity. The British Authority placed many of the tribal groups in Ndola and other cities to break up tribal identity and governmental institutions, but instead many of the groups strengthened their tribal ethnic and political identities. In a similar way, the Relocation program for Americans Indians also sought to dismantle tribal identities through urbanization, but also found that people maintained their tribal identities and institutions.



For Epstein, ethnicity comes from within the group and not based solely on modes of production. Groups define their identity and set boundaries, not in product or a single phenomenon, but rather, through a profound, internal set of core values and beliefs. The ethnic boundaries define the group and the group's interactions with others maintain and reinforce the boundary. Nevertheless, the question on the nature of ethnicity and how it is generated and transmitted remains. Epstein examines this last question further through his examination of the relationship between children and grandparents.

Epstein focuses his study on the mechanics of ethnicity by examining how ethnicity is generated and transmitted. Epstein notes

“However, the matter becomes acute, and assumes quite a different complexion, when people are thrust, as in the process of migration, into a strange and unfamiliar environment marked by ethnic heterogeneity, by cultural diversity, and by new ranges of choice. Individuals and groups are thus impelled into fresh confrontations with self, leading to the buttressing of established forms of inclusiveness or the emergence of new expressions of exclusiveness and separateness (Epstein, 1978:100).”

The creation of these new expressions by the group or individual becomes a means to mitigate the new situation. Abner Cohen examined this relationship between ethnicity and religion further in his study of Hausa migrants in the cities of Western Nigeria.

Cohen followed a Transactionalist perspective, along with an Ethno-genetic sense of history. He believed that Barth's view of fixed categories was good for building cognitive maps of a group left many methodological, logical, and sociological issues open and unanswered, and little room for the development of a hypothesis or further analysis (Cohen, 1974: xii-xiii). While building a cognitive map is an important first step in examining ethnicity, the next logical step is to examine the process of group identity, and its fluctuations through time and experience. Ethnicity then becomes something more

than just a series of taxonomic categories that define a group, but also the processes that maintain a group's identity despite external pressures or instead of maintenance, become overwhelmed and assimilated into the mainstream. Cohen stresses that ethnicity is a complex process of relationships between an individual and the group and is driven by the obligations to each other. Membership within a group means the acceptance and performance of the group's beliefs, morays, structure, and worldview. As Cohen notes, ethnicity is not the sum total of its individual members, and its culture is not the sum total of the strategies adopted by independent individuals (Cohen, 1974:xiii).

The main focus of his work among the Hausa was the dramatic shift in religious beliefs, practices, and organization in relation to the shifts in the national politics of Nigeria, specifically in the Sabo area of Western Nigeria in the 1950s (Cohen, 1969:12). With the eventual loss of authority over their land, the loss of chiefly power, a change in traditional economics, and their distinct branch of Islam, Hausa ethnic distinctness became constrained. Despite their anxieties of the increasing Yoruba presence in the Sabo, the Hausa were not afraid of losing their ethnic distinctness, but instead were more concerned about the losing their livelihood (Cohen, 1969:14). The Hausa organize their ethnic identity in two ways. Within the Hausaland of northern Nigeria, they maintain a distinct tribally centered organization, belief system, and a set of social relations. When the Hausa migrate to cities or other tribal regions, their organizational and ethnic identity are based on and interconnected with the requirements of long distance trade (Cohen, 1969:15). What Cohen observed was that the Hausa would adapt their ethnic organizations and to some extent their identities to meet the needs of the social environments. Hausa migrants create for themselves trade relationships with other groups

and situate themselves as the middlemen between Northern and southern groups. This creates an economic and political identity that may look as if Hausa migrants are assimilating into the new cultural landscapes are instead maintaining their uniqueness by filling a niche in the cities of the Yorubaland. For the Hausa, trade and traditional culture are inseparable and bolster each other (Cohen, 1969:9). But the trade culture also acts as a way to support religious development and facilitates change in new socio-political environments. Trade for the Hausa is an important category that allows the retention of traditional culture by its very act, and innovation to help Hausa migrants adapt to new living conditions and situations. Migrant Hausa re-create their traditional life through the social role of economic intermediaries. Cohen notes that in many migrant communities, traditional institutions and organizations provide mechanisms for maintaining their distinctiveness (Cohen, 1969:192).

Barth, Epstein, and Cohen present theories of ethnicity that follow an evolutionary framework that focuses on the processes involved in the continuity and innovation of ethnic identity. They examine the mechanisms that permit ethnic groups to maintain their existence as cultural entities. These adaptive mechanisms manifest when an ethnic group is dealing with external forces. Whether it is Epstein's social situations, Cohen's political re-tribalization, or Barth's core values as "identity" filters, these mechanisms are part of a group's repertoire and represent the cumulative experiences of group's members from past and present generations, a type of cultural database, and employed when needed and stored when not in use. This process of fluctuations is a dynamic system of categories that appear and utilized at varying degrees that are dependent on the situation. These categories are not static, repetitions of past adaptive

strategies, but are continuously updated and innovated as ethnic groups employ them. It is this dynamic ebb and flow of new and old experiences and events that keep ethnic identities continuous and viable.

In regards to the Chicago American Indian community, these works are significant because of their focus on tribal ethnic groups struggling to maintain their distinctiveness while experiencing pressures from other ethnic groups. Of these, Epstein and Cohen's work in Africa are noteworthy as they examine tribal ethnic groups living in urban areas and in multi-tribal contexts. The tribes of the African Copper-Belt, the Hausa of Ibadan, and Urban Indians have employed various strategies to maintain their identities and uniqueness within multi-tribal and multi-ethnic/religious contexts. In all three cases, there is a demonstration of the resiliency of ethnic core values. Groups turn to these values and structures to evaluate, maintain, or choose innovations to help them adapt to new situations. A similar type of identity maintenance is found among urban Indians. Their external symbols of identity often melded into the mainstream society, but retained their tribal ethnic identities and institutions. They also demonstrate that these core values are mutable, as Cohen noted in the case of the Hausa (Cohen, 1969).

In the face of external pressures, ethnic identity strengthens as both a way to resist unwanted or uncontrolled change and as way to insure the group's control over necessary innovations. What is important to stress is that ethnic groups define themselves first and foremost and determine as a group how to adapt to changes in the social, political, ecological, and economic environments. Barth's observation that religion or more accurately the sacred plays an important role as a mediating device to help a group with

change and fluctuations in their various environments becomes important for this research.

### **Sacralized Identity:**

Hans Mol's theory of Sacralized Identity demonstrates a significant break from the predominant view of religion as simply one aspect of ethnic and individual identity. Religion does not exist within a vacuum, but is simply a point within the bigger context of identity. Mol views identity as split into two parts: the sacred and the secular. Between these two parts, other aspects of identity such as social, political, economic, and landscape flow to and fro between the sacred and the secular depending on the needs and interests of the collective group or individual. Identity, both individual and ethnic are part of a large system. From this it can be said that the sacred represents the aspect of identity of extreme importance, the aspects with deep meaning to the group or individual; or the intangibles of a group that define who they are and their place in the universe. In many ways, the sacred side of identity is the dwelling place of cosmologies or worldviews, the paradigms through which groups and individuals mitigate the seen and unseen aspects of the worlds around them.

However, is this religion? Not necessarily. Religion can exist within the sacred side of identity, but is not exclusive to it. Cosmology is the base from which religion originates. While Mol utilizes the word religion, starting with cosmology is more fruitful as it can guide and influence both the secular and the sacred. Cosmology is a group or individual's perspective of the world and their place in it, and sets the guidelines for relationships with place, people and other animals, plants, and religion for the most is the

physical manifestations of a spiritual belief or philosophy. In a larger sense, a group or person's cosmology is probably the most sacred thing they can have. Anyone can have a cosmology, including Agnostics and Atheists. A cosmology does not require a specific list of "must haves", instead it is a perspective of the universe, and how it operates.

Spiritual beliefs and philosophies, and subsequently religious practice, are influenced by cosmology. This brings up the concept of Mol's circle, halved into sacred and secular, as the cosmology or paradigm that influences the activities within the two halves.

There is also a third segment, the fuzzy line that separates the sacred and the secular. I say fuzzy because this line is where the two sections can merge and produce amalgams such as religio-political and economic systems, and secular religion (e.g. Soviet communism). This fuzzy line is where transitions and modifications can occur; being the catalyst and generator that drives political, economic, social, cultural, and religious aspects of a group or individual's needs. The needs of a group or individual are fluid in that the need changes depending on their current situation or context. Times of flux bring about modifications to existing systems within a group paradigm. Cultural norms and behaviors find themselves in situations where they need to evolve to meet the demands of external stressors. However, the change is not quick. Instead, it can be slow and steady and thought out. Groups and individuals modify their behaviors (in a greater ethnic/cultural sense) by turning to core values that are deeply connected to the cosmology of the group.

Mol's theoretical perspectives in many ways influenced by Barth and other Transactionalists in terms of social transactions and societal need, but also in many ways draws from Ninian Smart's critiques of religious studies and his multidimensional

approach to the study of religious events and phenomena. He also draws from Durkheim's stance that religious phenomena are communal and linked the individual to the large society. Durkheim's vision of religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things that bind a community (Durkheim, 1975) is an important idea found in Mol's writings, and most notably the views of Fredrik Barth.

Barth noted that religion, along with family/kinship; provide the core foundation of ethnic identity. Thus if we imagine Barth's view of ethnic identity as a series of circles, each circle representing an aspect of ethnic identity; at the center of this would be a circle containing religion and familial tradition. As ethnic groups face external pressures, there is undoubtedly a return to familial and spiritual foundations. Because this is the core of identity, it acts as a filtering mechanism that facilitates change to external aspects of identity such as social and political structure, material culture, economic activities, and other material aspects of ethnic identity. Mol adds to this by bisecting the circle simply into sacred and secular halves. Religion and familial traditions can have both sacred and secular aspects, depending on the particular need. Most important for this research is that Mol's theory and Transactionalist ideas in general see religion and the sacred as an active process in the formation of group and individual identity. The following section will explore Mol's theory in more detail.

#### *Sacralization Theory: Premise and Case Studies:*

Religion within the Chicago American Indian community represents a complex system of various tribal beliefs and ancestry, personal and family experiences, economic and political conditions, and processes of innovation and continuity in individual and

group identity. To properly examine the religious and spiritual nature of this community, it is necessary to examine how the beliefs and practices of individuals and their tribal groups have remained constant, have adapted to the urban experience, and how this affects the religious views of the community as a whole. It is important to note that by understanding how religion acts as a boundary mechanism that allows ethnic or national groups to contend with social, ecological, and political flux. Barth notes that in terms of method:

“It focuses on the cultural and interactional enablements and constraints that affect actors, with consequences that can be seen in patterning of resulting acts and their aggregate entailments. In this way, the micro-level where most of our anthropological observations are located, and the macro-level of institutional forms and historical processes, can be integrated (Barth, 1990:651).”

The integration of patterns of religiosity and other variables become most apparent when a group is in instability or transition. Ultimately, religion or sacralized identity (identity made sacred) exists relative to a social action and transactional norms (Hefner, 1983:674). This process is demonstrated through Sacralization, in which religion fluctuates in importance in relation to external forces and acts a core category to which a group can mitigate the flux.

Hans Mol’s theory of Sacralization originated in the early 1970s and observes that religion and spirituality is a sacred or “sacralized” identity that is one part of an individual’s identity, which contributes to their ethnic identity. In other words, religion and spirituality are simply parts of a group or individual’s identity that involve the unseen and sacred realms. What he found in his research was that ethnic and group identity was preserved and passed on through this sacred identity. In 1976, Hans J. Mol wrote, *Identity and the Sacred: A Sketch for a New Social-Scientific Theory of Religion*. The book was



written at a time when religious theory and anthropologists were looking for a new way to study religion beyond the prominent psychological and structuralist views. Mol defines religion as the sacralization of identity. He notes that identity is an omnipresent characteristic in all species, and it is something that animals defend with great passion, it something integral to their survival. In the case of religion, a symbolic system expands identity beyond simple biologic functions and needs. Mol defines sacralization as the process on the level of symbolic systems; certain patterns acquire the same eternal and stable quality, which is similar to the consolidation and stabilization of new genetic material (Mol, 1976:5). Because symbolic systems can change in a variety of ways, sacralization provides a checking mechanism that allows, prohibits, or justifies the changes. This process protects identity, which is a system of meaning, system of order, and a definition of reality for a group or individual (Mol, 1976:6). Sacralization also allows for a conceptual analysis and generalizations of the functions and nature of religion (Mol, 1976:7).

Mol presents an evolutionary model for religion that draws slightly from Robert Bellah's (and subsequently from the Marxists perspectives of Talcott Parsons and Max Weber) scheme that trace the forces of differentiation in religion over time and the formation of identity. However, the similarities end there. Bellah's view of religious evolution as a process of increasing differentiation and complexity of organization that endows a group or individual to gain greater ability to adapt to its environment and that religion provides cognitively and motivationally meaningful concept of identity (Mol, 1976:19, 21). Mol however questions this view. If Bellah is correct, then humanity would be changing their religion and identity constantly due to the forces of change, and there

would be no cultural continuity (Bellah is in the same school of thought as Max Weber). Weber believed that religion in the western world was on the decline due to a drop in church attendance. For Weber, religious activities are linked only to external factors or modes of production, and as they change, so would the role of religion in civil society. Essentially, religion in the Western world was to be replaced by a secular, corporate society. Because the change in the post-war economy was pushing a corporate, industrial model, Weber believed that people would turn away from traditional religious beliefs and religion would eventually die out (Mol, 1976). The Weberian view, which Bellah and Parsons have maintained, sees religious identity as discontinuous and would eventually buckle under external socio-economic pressures, and thus transforming or dawning into a new and enlightened belief system. For the Weberian Marxist, there is no continuity in religious thought or tradition, but only temporary rest points in-between drastic and/or catastrophic fluctuations in the socio-economic level of a society. This perspective laid the foundation for Secularization theory (Ebaugh, 386-387:2002; Bourq, 1977:279; Duke and Johnson, 1989:210-211).

In the 1950s, sociologist Milton Yinger challenged this idea. He noted that Weberian views of religion (especially in the United States) were incorrect and that religion and religiosity, especially in the United States, was on the rise, despite the rise of the industrial complex and secularism (Yinger, 1951). Luckhart and Mol share this view, and it exists today in the writings of Hammond and Orsi (Mol, 1973; Hammond, 1998; Orsi, 1999). For scholars such as Mol, Luckhart, and Yinger, religion is not just a system of material expressions and social structures, but also an abstract element that maintains the core belief and identity and allows for change in the external expression to meet the

current spiritual needs of individuals and communities. Ultimately, the distinction between Weber and Bellah and Mol, is that the Neo-Marxist perspective focuses on the external, morphology of religious experience. Mol however, focuses on systematic, mechanical processes and the influence of, or lack of, on the internal group dynamic. Mol is concerned about the systemic relationship and interactions of secular and sacred elements within ethnic groups, and their interaction with and to external forces of change and transition.

Mol notes that evolution consists of attraction and repulsion, mutual need and basic conflict (Mol, 1976:21). He states that:

“In the battle the conventional religious forces and organizations are very partial: they strengthen, through sacralization, the identity dialectic. Yet there is much give and take. Viable religious orientations and organizations develop sophisticated mechanisms to deal with change (Mol, 1976:21).”

The core of Mol’s argument is that cultures and their religious organizations and traditions are open enough to change, but control the change, in terms of the amount and rate of change. He also views religion as an integral part of identity. There is fluidity between the mundane and the sacred, since both are experiences and processes, which are important components of identity. The main position of sacralization theory is that of continuity and religion as a system of adaptive mechanisms to cope with social stressors. While religious institutions, practices, and beliefs may fluctuate between a sacral or secular status, based on community need or relevance, there still remains a continuous thread that connects something that is now secular to its once sacred origins, and vice versa. Despite external pressures, there is a survival instinct in groups to maintain their identity, both ethnic and religious. Mol found this in his research on Dutch Calvinist

living in New Zealand. Because they were not living in Holland, and were now living in a foreign country with a different state religion (Anglican), instead of assimilating into the mainstream, they personified their Dutch and Calvinist cultural traditions to differentiate themselves from their Anglican New Zealand neighbors (Mol, 1976).

*The Fluidity in Cultural Identity and the Stability of Spiritual Identity:*

The key to Mol's theory is that the sacred is dynamic and fluid. The sacred and all of its aspects are similar to the same terms as thermodynamics, where energy is neither lost nor gained but stays constant. In cultural terms, the sacred exists as potential if its elements are dormant and action when it becomes relevant to the group. This idea is reflected in Barth's perspective as the sacred (or religion as he puts it) acts as the anchoring aspects of a people's identity and is always present. In times of flux, the sacred that may have dormant aspects are re-examined and the group finds solutions in an existing body of spiritual belief and practice. Old items are found to deal with external stressors, but are modified to meet new demands. The sacred exists in a constant tension of push and pull and it is possible this push and pull that allows sacred beliefs and practices to stay alive. Conversely, if a group does not modify its sacred structures and practices in the face of new demands, then a type of extinction can occur where it fractures and disintegrates. From this however, new forms of the sacred appear with a base in the old philosophy, but with modifications to create a stable core for the group or individual. The sacred was neither lost nor gained, but it did transform. While there is much talk of external stressors, internal stressors also play a role in this process. Transformative forces can occur both internally and externally.

Internal group dynamics play an important role in innovation and adaptation, especially in terms of coping with tragedies or the influx of new beliefs or ideas. In dealing with tragedies, religion provides a mechanism in which to bring meaning and understanding of disasters, death and illness, and violent conflicts (Pargament et al, 1992; Maynard et al, 2001; Ebaugh, 2002:385; Masquelier, 1997). In some cases, tragedies can push a group or segments of a group to push for structural change as many Muslims in Europe did after the 9/11 attacks (DW Staff, 2007). For the congregations of Appalachian Pentecostal Holiness Churches, ritual snake handling offers an ecstatic experience that bolsters community bonds, provides a place to express feelings publicly, and transcend poverty (La Barre, 1969:174).

In other cases, encounters with new groups, through immigration or through encroachment, can cause either internal growth or external innovations. Mol found this among Dutch Calvinist migrant communities in New Zealand and Indonesia. For these communities, the structure and philosophy of Dutch Calvinism helped them adapt to a new social and cultural environment while still maintaining their uniqueness as Dutch. Currently, many Germans are reevaluating the meaning of religion and its relationship to German identity in the face of new religious options and issues with Catholic and Protestant doctrines (Walker, 2007; Liedel, 2007), or in the case of India, the relationship between religious identity and national politics (Mitra, 1991). This same process allowed Kenekuk, the Kickapoo Prophet, in the 1820s and 1830s to counteract the encroaching American presence in Illinois and maintain unity among the Kickapoo (Herring, 1985). He combined evangelical Protestantism, Catholic ritual, and the traditional religion of the Kickapoo by looking inward to the needs of himself and his people (Herring, 1985:295).

This process allowed the Kickapoo to adapt to the changing cultural and political environment of the Midwest, while finding ways to maintain their cultural identity and specific tribal spiritualities.

The Sidamo of southern Ethiopia adapted their traditional form of cultic worship to alleviate social and cultural pressures from growing Muslim and Christian converts within their territory. However, the acceptance of these world religions includes an extensive indigenization of new creeds and rituals and diversification into new movements (Vecchiato, 1993:176). Healing and therapeutic practices occur through traditional possession cults. The diversification reflected the adoption of the differing Christian and Muslim denominations. Many of the words and images used by possession cults derived from, and used in accordance with, Christian iconography and Koranic doctrinal premises (Vecchiato, 1993:187). However, the structure of the ritual, significance of symbols, and the primary focus of healing through exorcism remains constant. These adaptations allowed many of the tribal groups to interact with the world through joining mainstream world religions and thus become part of a larger religious body and simultaneously maintaining their core religious principals; retaining their ethnic uniqueness in both an Ethiopian and world context.

Ethnic identity among the tribes of Northeast Oklahoma demonstrates how religion for these tribes acts as a mechanism to maintain distinct and cohesive tribal identities. Native people in Northeast Oklahoma follow Christian and Traditional belief systems or practice a hybrid of the two (e.g. Native American Church). Among the different groups there exists both divisive and unifying aspects of the various Christian and traditional religions. Christianity is classified as the “white” dominating culture that

has the power to create and enforce the divisions between tribal and Christian belief systems, and the traditional as being based in “ethnic” tribal beliefs (Hamill, 2006:135). Nevertheless, despite the exterior Christian/traditional split, there is a common phenomenon in Indian country, which is the tribalization of Christian belief. This phenomenon appears in the synchronic expressions of Catholicism and traditional Pueblo religious beliefs (Radding, 1998). Each tribe had its own version of a particular denomination. Consequently, a Choctaw Baptist and a Potawatomie Baptist are in fact two different religions despite the common designation of Baptist. Instead of Indians assimilating into Christianity, the tribes of northeast Oklahoma incorporated Christian belief and doctrine into their preexisting spirituality (Hamill, 2006:139). This also shows up in chapter seven, which focuses on traditional belief systems. The boundaries between Christian and traditional beliefs are very fluid and connect with each other under the large umbrella of tribe. Ultimately, religion in the Indian communities helps many maintain their tribal identities, histories, community structures, and their sense of place. It allows tribal groups to innovate their existing system of belief, thus keeping it relevant to current needs, and simultaneously, re-invigorates traditional religious structure, meaning, and efficacy. Religion and spirituality for these tribes sets up ethnic boundaries that make tribes distinct from each other and their non-Indian neighbors. It should be noted that the religious aspects of these tribal communities are not an external expression, but more internal. The Indians of northeast Oklahoma have maintained their tribal identities, but have modified some of their external aspects to show a sense of unity with other tribes and celebrating a common status of Indian in the face of non-Native culture.

In the mainstream American context, the processes of change and continuity and the fluctuations in religious expression and ethnic identity in relationship to the secularizing forces of mainstream America on Orthodox Christian communities.

Hammond noted that for ethnic groups whose members begin to place the religious experience on individual terms, there lays the possibility of fracturing the relationship with ethnic identity (Hammond, 1993:66). However, among marginalized groups, either by another group or by their own choice, then the relationship between ethnicity and religion remains strong (Hammond, 1993). Religious experience, practice, and belief along with ethnic identity can vary in degree of adherence or apathy depending on the situation the group finds itself in and that secularization and assimilation often correlate (Hammond, 1993:66). This assumption was based on a decline and deficit of external religious activity such as church attendance or visible signs of religious identity.

However, do declines in external religious expression and an increase in secular practice necessarily mean a group is assimilating or already assimilated into the mainstream society? Hammond suggests that people are differentially involved in both the primary and secondary groups (church/non-church) and that these involvements influence the meaning the church can have and thus influence the kind of religious identity available (Hammond, 1988:1).

He employs the theoretical frameworks of Hans Mol, Thomas Luckmann, and Emile Durkheim. He employs Mol's two views of identity, the immutable core identity and the transient adaptable identity, and Durkheim's view that religion is, "born out of the social circumstances providing those involuntary roots...to represent their sense of unity in the groups of which they are members and to express that unity in symbol and



ceremony, belief and ritual (Hammond, 1988:5).” Hammond agrees with Luckmann’s view that, “religious institutions unite people and contribute to the formation of individual consciousness and personality...however, the relationship of the individual to the sacred cosmos and social order is transformed (Hammond, 1988:6).” As a result, people can be located on a grid whose two dimensions are involvement with the primary church going or group-expressive group and the secondary secular or individual-expressive group (Hammond, 1988:6). What is important within this grid are the ties people have with these two groups, or the commitment factor. Hammond seems to be observing similar phenomena in his observations of the Greek Orthodox community in Los Angeles and contemporary American Christian denominations in general. Hammond notes that despite the visible decline of church activities in America, religion itself has not disappeared (Hammond, 1988:7). In many ways, people had turned to an internal religious experience that does not necessitate going to church. At the same time, people may fulfill the social ritual experience by attending other events in a similar ethnic or religious community. As Hans Küng notes, “religion never disappears... (It) is something that stays, even if it is suppressed (Leidel, 2004:1).” Hammond’s perspective reminds one not to assume something does not exist because it is not openly visible.

Analogous to Hammond’s research within the Greek Orthodox community, there has been similar research conducted within the Los Angeles Iranian immigrant community and the Yao and Miao communities in China. Iranian immigrants in Los Angeles are divided into four groups based on religion and their status in Iran. Muslim Iranians are often secular in their beliefs, as they are part of the majority who took part in the secularization and pre-Islamic identity movement under the Pahlavi Shahs

(Bozorgmehr, 1997:394). This group adapted fairly well and integrated into American Society without much stress. However, for Iranians of the Jewish, Baha'i, and Armenian Apostolic faiths, their marginalized status in Iran carried over into the United States, which resulted in each of these groups forming their own unique communities based on religious orientation (Bozorgmehr, 1997:391-395). These marginalized groups maintained ethnically distinct communities in Los Angeles and maintained stronger boundaries through religion to differentiate themselves from secular Muslim Iranian immigrants and the large American population. The Yao and Miao ethnic minorities in China employ an intense use of religious ritual to differentiate themselves from the Han Chinese majority (Rack, 2005). This intensity arises from their marginalized status in both rural and urban China where they are required to conform to Han standards. For the Miao, the practice of drum dances became a mechanism to maintain their ethnic uniqueness, pass on tradition and values, and to mitigate life within the parameters of mainstream China (Rack, 2005: 48-55).

What may seem like secularization may in fact be the result of an ethnic group adapting their practices to fit a new social/cultural environment, or the reason for the ritual may not be necessary at a particular moment in time. On further inspection, one may find that an ethnic group has maintained its religious identity, but is visible not so much within elaborate ritual, but within the simplest but most meaningful rituals, whether a prayer at dawn or the following of one's vision, ultimately unseen by the public.

### **Summary:**

Hans Mol's theory follows in the tradition of Barth, Cohen, and Epstein. However, he focused on the sacred aspect of identity. Mol observed through his field experience that ethnic groups who are in some type of social fluctuation or marginalization often increased both their ethnic identities, especially their religious identity (Mol, 1976). The level of differentiation both ethnically and religiously depends on the degree of marginalization, acceptance, and community need. Mol's Transactionalist approach is important as it provides a method and basis to examining patterns of adaptation and conservation of ethnic beliefs and values in a changing world. Like other Transactionalist perspectives, it follows a holistic approach that pulls it away from traditional views of religion and allows the researcher to understand what the sacred means to a group or individual and its effects on the secular side of identity. Mol supported and expanded Barth's view that ethnic groups maintain their identity in domestic and religious traditions and values (Barth, 1969:16).

Sacred identity acts as a mechanism that simultaneously controls the flow of innovation into, and the maintenance of, an ethnic group's core identity and in regards to the degree of which religious and ethnic identity manifests in light of the social situations (Mol, 1976; Cohen, 1969). The sacred aspects of identity become a core structure that a group or individual can rely on as a constant force in their lives. The sacred, however, is not an unbending entity, but a dynamic system that can mitigate adaptation and becomes a place for evaluation and strategy and a reminder of a group's values, genesis, and definition of the group self (or cosmology). From this cultural focal point, ethnic groups can make sound decisions as to the group's future.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **TRANSACTIONALISM AND URBAN INDIANS**

*“It is wrong to assume that American Indians have completely assimilated into the urban mainstream and discarded their native cultures, simply because urban Indians do not dress or appear in the stereotypical fashions of the past (Fixico, 2000:43).”*

The previous chapter gave examples of Transactionalism in regards to religious and ethnic identity from a larger world perspective. This chapter will examine Urban Indians through a transactional lens to illustrate the adaptations and cultural maintenance of Urban Indians. As seen in the previous chapter, Transactional/Sacralization theory represents an active process of adaptation and preservation of ethnic identity. This process allows groups to maintain order in a state of flux. This process has and does occur within Urban Indian communities in the United States and Canada. The urbanization of Native Americans has happened in a variety of ways including the movement to urban centers for work, federal policies, or in some cases like in Los Angeles and Seattle, the city grew around the tribes. The latter is occurring in Alberta, Canada, where urban reserves are being created in accordance to past treaties, where the land in question happens to fall in urban areas (Barron and Garcea, 1999). In other cases, many Native Peoples have had a long history of urban lifestyles such as the peoples of Central and South America or the agricultural tribes of the Midwest and Southeast. But despite how or why Native people arrived or lived in urban areas since the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there has always been some amount of flux that occurred from

external stressors. Living in urban areas required Native people to adapt and modify their lifestyles and cultural practices to meet new living conditions and interacting with other ethnic groups and tribes. While many external aspects of Native life and culture blended into the mainstream economic system and social fashions, many of the core structures of Urban Indians remained intact. In many ways this was made possible by two entities; Native community organizations and tribal and social networks. Both, at certain points, overlap and more often than not work in conjunction with each other.

Through this flux, however, tribal identities were and are maintained. Many of the Indians living in Chicago and other cities had no desire to give up their tribal ethnic identities and from as early as 1910, began to create organizations and articulate their roles to shape a more positive place in society for Indian people (Beck, 2002:118). Fixico noted that:

“Furthermore, the persistence of Indian tribal cultures thriving in cities remains vastly underestimated. In fact much of this persistence occurs through the continual practice of traditional Indian cultures and remains relatively invisible to other members of urban society. Seldom do minorities completely integrate into a dominant society, because they maintain distinctive patterns of customs. It is wrong to assume that American Indians have completely assimilated into the urban mainstream and discarded their native cultures, simply because urban Indians do not dress or appear in the stereotypical fashions of the past. And this mental picture is so etched in non-Indian minds (Fixico, 2000:44).”

Significant to this point is the aftermath of the 1833 Treaty of Chicago, which removed the Pokagon and United Bands of Pottawatomie, Ottawa, and Chippewa from the state of Illinois, a large number of Indians still remained and lived in and around Chicago (Straus, 2003; Beck, 2002; Vogel, 1980; Mucha, 1981; Garbarino, 1973; Lurie, 1961, Straus, 1990). By the time Relocated Indians arrived in Chicago in the 1950s, they were met by an active community with a tradition of organizations that assisted Indian people from

social services to cultural preservation. It should be noted that the urbanization of American Indians not necessarily a recent or even contemporary phenomenon (Thornton, 1980:22). American Indians have been living in and have been involved in the development of many large cities like Los Angeles, Detroit, Seattle, and Chicago (Thornton, 1980:23). American Indian urbanization is a “phenomenon of differential fertility and mortality experience of Indian peoples in urban and rural areas and differential migrations to urban and rural areas (Thornton, 1980:23). In the case of Chicago, migration and settlement (both permanent and temporary) have been common occurrences through the history of the region. For many of the Chicago Indian community, the region is their cultural and spiritual homeland. At the same time, for Indians from outside the region, Chicago represents a landscape that is part of greater sense of connection to the continent. Garbarino notes that the difference between Indian and European ethnic communities is that Europeans become physically disconnected from their homelands, whereas Indians are not separated from the land of their birth and maintain a continuous connection to it (Garbarino, 1980:60). Even if Indians leave their tribal homelands, they can easily return. In the late 1990s, John Dall, opened a regional Native Youth conference with “Welcome to my land.” As Hočąk, he sees Chicago as part of his traditional tribal land, as it is the historic and ancient land of the Hočąkger. He followed up by saying that all land in this country is Indian land, whether you are in the city or reservation. Indian land is not defined by legal boundaries alone, but by the connections Native people have to place. To live in the heart of Chicago, is to be home for many tribes such as the Hočąk, Pottawatomie, Miami, Menominee, Iowa, Meskwakie, and others. This sense of place has strong implications on Indian identity in urban and

rural areas (Garbarino, 1980:60). This sense of place may have contributed to the persistence of a Native identity in the Chicago area. Important to this sense of connection and identity are the institutions that maintain these ties and preserve and develop a regional and tribal identity.

#### *Native Organizations:*

American Indian community organizations developed at various points of Indian urbanization. In Chicago, community organizations helped Native people adapt to urban life and most importantly, maintain their tribal identities and practices. In a larger perspective, urban or urbanized Indians have maintained much of their identity through many socio-political institutions at various times throughout the North American continents. In the urban context, community organizations became Indian land, space, or territory (Lobo, 2001:76). Community organizations act as urban reserves where Indians from various tribes can find support through connecting to other tribal members or with other tribes to deal with larger urban issues. For the Chicago area Beck has noted that the Chicago Indian community has maintained a continual voice in both political and social realms at least since the 1890s (Beck, 2003). Within this voice, a particular identity has also been maintained that connects the place of Chicago and the American Indians who have called it home. Urban Indian identity has existed in many forms throughout the history of the Chicago area. Though it has changed throughout time, it has demonstrated the continuance and sustainability of a Native presence and culture in the Chicago area through time, particularly within the role of inter and multi-tribal alliances in the maintenance of identity and culture. The traditional social structures of the tribes of the

Midwest, such as clan, economic, or political networks have laid the foundation for later and even the current community.

The 1833 Treaty of Chicago was the final land cession treaty in Illinois and removed a large portion of Anishinabek (Pottawatomie, Ojibwe, and Ottawa) from the Chicago area. However, the treaty allowed for a large number of tribal members to give up their treaty annuities in exchange to stay and acquire a deed to their properties (Kappler, 1972: 305). Many stayed along the Desplaines River, especially near the Robinson Reserve. The reserve was granted to Pottawatomie chief, Chiibingwenowin (aka Alexander Robinson) in the 1829 Treaty of Prairie DuChien and was the last reserve to remain after the removal in 1837 (Kappler, 1972:299; Vogel, 1980:5, Clifton, 1977). After moving west with his band to Mayetta, Kansas, Robinson returned to his reserve on the Des Plaines River in present day Schiller Park, IL, sometime between 1837-1842. In the 1840's during the Tyler administration, the reserve was surveyed and a deed was given to Robinson. The deed was interesting because it issued an executive order from President Tyler and states that possession of this tract was granted forever to Alexander Robinson and his heirs or assigns, and could not be leased or conveyed to anyone without permission of the president of the United States (Vogel, 1980:5). Robinson's land was protected from encroachment from the State of Illinois and the city of Chicago. The descendants of Alexander Robinson remained on the reserve, which was the last vestige of Indian owned land in Illinois, and would remain so until 1973, when his great grandson, Herbert Boettcher, would pass away (Vogel, 4; 1980). In their time, the Robinson family hosted many Pottawatomie and other Indians who would travel back to Chicago from the reservations out west. Despite the act of removal, many Pottawatomie,



Ojibwe, and Ottawa, along with Miami, Menominee, Hočąk, and Kickapoo remained in Illinois. Regardless of the 1832 and 1833 treaties, which removed the political authority and land holdings of Indian tribes, many individuals remained (Beck, 2002:297). Many traders still operated their businesses and the Great Lakes shipping industry employed many Indians (Beck, 2002:297). Chicago's first mayoral election in 1837, involved a face-off between New York railroad magnet, William Ogden and local Ottawa trader, Madore Beaubien and Chicago's first city council included four Pottawatomie aldermen (Peterson, 1980:99). Beaubien technically won this race. However, Ogden was the preferred candidate by territorial officials and the business community, due to the need to establish Chicago as a railroad hub, and resulted in William Ogden becoming the first mayor of Chicago. Beyond economic and political reasons behind the "re-evaluated" votes, the 1837 election also represented a social and cultural change in the Chicago area. Ogden represented the Anglo-Protestant east. With social plans to Americanize the Midwest, the predominant Catholic communities of Chicago would become subsumed into Protestant dominated perspective of religion, business, and social structures. For tribes such as the Pottawatomie who maintained a large Catholic contingent, did not fit into the ideals of Ogden and others from the Northeast. As a response, many Native Peoples utilized the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago as a levying device for social, legal, and economic support (Danckers, 2000, Peterson, 1980).

The period between 1830 and 1890 was active in terms of Indian policy and is important to mention because it influences the movement of many Native People from reservation and rural communities to urban centers (and vice versa). As the United States grew, Congress realized that in order to expand the boundaries of the United States, it

needed to do something with the Indians or commonly referred to as the Indian Problem. An early solution to this problem was the Removal Act of 1830, which removed many tribes (to some extent) west of the Mississippi River. However, this plan stood in the way of the settlement of the American West. The new solution became to eradicate American Indian economy, territorial holdings, and lifestyle through military action. Again, this did not solve the problem. William Medill the commissioner of Indian Affairs pushed forth the idea of establishing “colonies” or “reservations” that would be exclusive to the natives, mimicking those in which the natives had created for themselves in the east (Sandweiss, 1996:174). This led to the creation of the reservation as a way to “protect” Native Americans from conflicts with settlers and to open former Native lands to settlement. This required tribes to cede territory for settlers, while maintaining a smaller piece of their traditional territory that would be free of settlement. Reservations were further divided into individual allotments through the Dawes Act in 1887. The act was to encourage private land ownership among individual Indian families. Social reformers had hoped to achieve six accomplishments through the dividing of Native land holdings which included: the breaking up of tribes as a social unit, encouraging individual initiatives, furthering the progress of native farmers, reducing the cost of native administration, securing parts of the reservations as Indian land, and finally opening the remainder of the land to white settlers for profit (Carlson, 1981:79). The concept of private property was intended to transform Indians into proper, Americans who would contribute to the greater American society. This policy was successful to a point in terms of breaking up land holdings for some tribes; however, tribal identities and family ties

remained, despite the loss of land. Various tribes continued their cultural lifestyles, though adapted and modified to meet the socio-political needs of the time.

After the Dawes Act and military actions proved to be unsuccessful in subduing and assimilating Indian culture and identity, Congress and its supporters would re-shift the focus from military actions to educational policies. The boarding school program of the 1880s through 1950s, which combine both federal and religious institutions, was believed by its supporters to be the best solution for assimilation. Indian children would be taken from the home communities and educated with mainstream American and European values and culture. The children were then to go back home and “modernize their communities.” This program too had its inherent problems. Many Indians went back to their home communities where they either returned to living a traditional lifestyle or became outcasts due to their lack of knowledge about the community. But despite the hard times many of the graduates of the boarding schools faced, the program failed in its attempt of total assimilation (Beck, 2002:298).

During the boarding school period, a new wave of Indians moves into Chicago. Many moved from the reservations they called home due to not being fully accepted in their communities or for work. With their education, they were able to find employment in many of the growing cities in the U.S. But in the cities they would also be faced with discrimination. This discrimination and isolation however would eventually create the base from which Urban Indian community development would spring forth. Of the more prominent urban Indians was a Dr. Carlos Montezuma, a Yavapai stomach surgeon who came to Chicago in the 1890s to set up a medical practice (Beck, 2002:297). Even though he was a doctor and an “assimilated” Indian from Carlisle, he still had a difficult time

setting up a practice and being accepted by the dominant society, as he was still seen as an Indian (Montezuma, Chicago Urban Records). Despite this, he continued his practice when he could and helped many Indians who came to Chicago with medical assistance, as a host to visiting delegations, or hosting encampments in various forest preserves around the city as a way to bring Indians, both local and nationally, together to discuss various issues (Beck, 2002:297). Montezuma was also an activist who called for the abolition of the BIA and for Indians to become more acculturated. His thought was that tribal ways were holding Indian people back, and that they were too isolated on reservation (Wilson, 2002:366). Many activists did not necessarily follow his views of acculturation; they did respect the sincerity of his beliefs and convictions for the betterment of Indian people's lives (Wilson, 2002:366). Montezuma in many ways lived in a conundrum of maintaining Indian identity and against the BIA's control of Native people, while simultaneously supporting the BIA's assimilationist programs. Ultimately, despite these contradictions, Montezuma activated and challenged members of the Chicago (and national) Indian community to focus on the pressing needs of American Indians, politically, socially, and even culturally and that Indians should have an ultimate say and voice on these issues.

In spite of these gatherings, no formal Indian organization existed until 1919 when the Indian Fellowship League was created in part by the Chicago Historical Society (Mucha, 1983:342; Chicago Urban Records, Indian Fellowship League). The IFL was composed of Native and non-Native members and reflected two views of Indian organization. Many of the non-Indian members were interested in promoting the artistic and cultural activities. Conversely, the Native members (representing some thirty-five

tribes) believed that they should be advocating for Indian rights that were being denied by the federal government (Beck, 2002:298). The IFL sponsored many cultural events, but geared them toward a white audience, to promote many pan-Indian and conservationist ideals (Chicago Urban Records, Indian Fellowship League). Eventually, the conflict of ideas would split the IFL, but it did demonstrate the strength of Indian desires to work on behalf of Indian people in order to protect the political and cultural rights that were guaranteed in the treaties of the nineteenth century (Beck, 2002:298).

In the same vein, The Grand Council Fire of American Indians would pick up where the IFL stopped in 1923 (Beck, 2002:298; Chicago Urban Records, Indian Council Fire). The Council Fire's Indian membership was as diverse as the IFL, but constituted a new group of Indians moving to cities; those educated in off-reservation boarding schools (Beck, 2002:298). Many of this new generation of leaders maintained the ideals set by Montezuma of supporting Indian rights, cultural values, and community service. In the beginning of the organization, they provided a social outlet for Indians living in Chicago, along with social services until the 1930s when the GCFAI leadership was taken over by its white membership (Beck, 2002:298). From the 1930s till 1986, the GCFAI would emphasize the exotic traditions of Indian culture over social service and support. This new focus on the exotic culture of American Indians, though theoretically against assimilation, appealed to a mainly white audience and the more pressing needs of American Indians such as treaty rights, land issues, poverty, and unemployment were deemphasized (Mucha, 1983:344). Many of Chicago's American Indians would leave the organization. It would not be until the late 1930s that an emphasis of social and cultural responsibility would return to Chicago Indian organizations.

By the 1930s, Illinois and local women's clubs had been the primary supporters of social service work for American Indians (Beck and LaPier, 2011:27). In March, 1930, Tsianina Blackstone, a well-known Cherokee-Creek opera mezzo-soprano, Anna Fitzgerald, and other Chicago area American Indian women organized the First Daughters of America (Beck and LaPier, 2011:27). The First Daughters of America was a Native women's organization that focused on social services up until the 1950s. In its charter, the club sought to discourage the unfair portrayal of the American Indian by wild west shows, the state, or motion picture, and to eliminate from text books all matters tending to race prejudice; to preserve and perpetuate the traditional arts, crafts, and music of the American Indian, and to emulate the supreme qualities of American Indian womanhood (Beck and LaPier, 2011:28). This organization filled in the social service need until organizations like The All Tribes American Indian Center and St. Augustine's Center for the American Indian would take on this role.

In 1947, two new organizations were founded. The first was the North American Indian Mission found by two local Indians, Willard La Mere (Hočąk) and Scott Thundercloud (Ottawa), along with a white friend (Mucha, 1983:345). This organization was small and short lived and focused social services and support to American Indian veterans and families who were newly arrived to Chicago. The second organization was made up of members of the Longhouse religion who maintained their cultural beliefs and ways and provided a social outlet for many Oneidas, Mohawks, and other Iroquois who came to Chicago (Mucha, 1983:345; Chicago Urban Records, NAES College Archives). In 1951, the Indian Service League founded by Albert Cobe (Ojibwe) in conjunction with the YMCA and the Chicago Park District provide an athletic outlet for many Chicago

Natives (LaGrand, 2002:144). While these organizations would provide some support and voice for the Chicago Indian community, the 1950s would usher in changes that still reverberate today.

### *Relocation and Beyond:*

During the early twentieth century, economic conditions for many reservations were poor. This was compounded by a change in migration and labor patterns due to Indians losing or selling off their allotments (LaGrande, 2002:39; Mucha, 1983:340-41). The lack of employment in reservations had also been something of a concern to the BIA during the late 1930s and 1940s. With the onset of WWII, the BIA decided to tap into the vast amount of Indian labor to work in factories supporting the war effort (LaGrande, 2002:34-35). When World War II ended, there were many Indians who once were employed in the war industry, had now lost their jobs, and simultaneously, many Indian veterans were returning home reservations (Wilson, 2002:358). Poor economic conditions on reservations for the most part could not handle the population increase, so many had to leave their reservation communities to find work in large cities (Wilson, 358:2002). In the midst of this, Chicago had retained much of its Indian workers, due to the large number industrial jobs. Garbarino noted that the Indian population during and after World War II that; “It is unquestionably the job opportunities resulting from the industrial build-up during World War II that enticed a number of individuals and families to Chicago and its suburbs (Garbarino, 1973:173). Along with industrial employment, many Indian veterans also stayed in the Chicago, having experienced the city while

stationed at surrounding bases such Great Lakes Naval Base, Fort Sheridan, and Fort McCoy (Wis.).

Even though some Indians remained in or near large cities, a large amount preferred to return to the communities of their birth. The growing number of unemployed Indians living on reservations would eventually gain a reaction from the BIA. In 1950, Dillon S. Myer became director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and began to construct a solution to the current economic situation on reservations (Wilson, 2002:358; Mucha, 1983:346). The solution to this problem would combine Myer's earlier work with the War Relocation Authority, which was responsible for the relocation, incarceration, and removal of Japanese-Americans and immigrants to internment camps (Wilson, 2002:358), and Congress's ongoing dilemma of the "Indian problem."

After World War II, old trends in Indian Policy were beginning to dominate Washington (Mucha, 1983:346; Lurie, 1961:480). Despite the Indian Reorganization Act, which reversed many of the policies of the Dawes Act, Congress was pushing to limit treaty responsibilities and to abolish reservations (Mucha, 1983:346). Congress changed from thinking that if Indians' specific problems were attended to (poverty, land use, etc...) they would stop being Indian and the Indian problem would be solved, to the idea that getting rid of Indians, and thus the problem, by dispersing them and relieving the government's responsibility for their specific problems (Lurie, 1961:480).

In 1951, the Bureau of Indian Affairs began the Relocation and Employment Assistance Program, which was an effort to move Indians from the low employment reservation areas to various cities where employment opportunities were greater (Garbarino, 1973:176; Wilson, 2002:358). The initial idea of Indian relocation began in



the 1940s, when a devastating winter blizzard swept across the Navajo and Hopi reservations of eastern Arizona (Ono, 2004:29). The federal government brought in supplies to help the two communities get through the winter. This led to the Navajo-Hopi Rehabilitation Act in 1950, which was to provide various health and education projects (Ono, 2004:29). This led to the idea that in order to solve the issue of poverty and overcrowding on reservations, off reservation employment opportunities were needed (Ono, 2004:30).

The Relocation and Employment Assistance Program coincided with the Termination Act of 1953 (Mucha, 1983:346). This act revoked federal recognition of tribes (including the Menominee and Klamath) Congress believed had become economically self-sufficient. Both of these acts were part of a new wave of assimilation policy which intended to assimilate Indians by either taking them off reservations or by eliminating reservations all together. Termination would inflict much chaos and disarray upon the communities who were terminated, but relocation, especially in Chicago, would create something very different.

As many American Indians found their way into Chicago, their transition from reservation/rural to urban life was at times easy or difficult depending on their personal circumstances. Garbarino notes that:

“Accommodation to urban life...seems to be highly individualistic and personalized. The accommodation factor is extremely difficult to measure, for two people of seemingly identical experience and background may react very differently to the city environment. If there is stability in the household, a strong family head, and a regular income, adjustment problems are usually either minor or nonexistent (Garbarino, 1973:202).”

Many of the newcomers to Chicago were promised jobs or vocational training through the relocation program, along with housing and social services. However, when they arrived they found little social support, substandard housing, which was often far from their job site, and adapting to life in Chicago was awkward for many people from rural areas (Beck, 2002:299; AIC, 2006:2; Garbarino, 1973:175-184; Wilson, 2002:212-219; Goodvoice, 2002; Garcia, 2002:193-204). For many of the relocatees, Chicago was not home and had very little connection to their tribal identities. Reservation communities were integral to the identity of many American Indians who had come to Chicago. The BIA would refer to reservations as concentration camps and prison when promoting the Relocation program, but many Indian did not feel the same way. Many Indians, especially those who were born and raised in a reservation, saw it as home and a place where one has their very being (Lurie, 1961:480). This feeling in many ways was reinforced by a lack of substantial support from the BIA. Many of the complaints about the program were not as much directed at its goals, but if the program actually worked (Garbarino, 1973:178). It should be noted that these complaints and problems were not unnoticed by the BIA. Fearing a backlash from welfare and civic groups, and fearing negative reports from unsuccessful relocatees may undermine confidence in the program, BIA Placement and Relocation Officer, Kurt Dreifuss, attempted to solve these issues quickly (Garcia, 2002:199). However, there was limited funding and the practical problems with relocation made the Chicago BIA staff, including Dreifuss, severe critics of the program (Garbarino, 1973:348). The solution to the need for adequate social service needs and social support would come from local Indian leadership.

In the tradition and drive to assist Indian people's needs, the existing Chicago Indian community began to respond to the needs of the relocatees and non-relocation program Indians. Dreifuss called together twenty-eight concerned welfare agents, clergy, executives, and university professors to come up with a solution to the urban Indian problem (Mucha, 1983:349). Among these individuals was John Willard, of the American Friends Service Committee, former Papago chief and University of Chicago graduate, Thomas Segundo, Ernest Naquyouma (Hopi), and Robert Whirling Thunder, who was a Chicago Park District instructor (Mucha, 1983:349). As the group experimented with different meeting places and events, Thomas Segundo and other Chicago Indians initiated the start of a new organization, with the help of John Willard and the American Friends Service Committee to help them establish an Indian social center similar to one established by the Quakers in Los Angeles (Mucha, 1983:350, AIC, 2006:1).

*The American Indian Center of Chicago:*

The All Tribes American Indian Center was organized in 1953 with the help of the BIA and local welfare organizations (AIC, 2006:1; Beck, 2002:299; LaGrande, 2002:139). The Center would later be shortened to the American Indian Center in 1954 (Mucha, 1983:351). The Center was unique from previous Indian organizations in that it was initiated by the Chicago Indian community and it focused on cultural preservation and social service. The Center emerged from previous Native organizations and the BIA Relocation Office in Chicago. Prior to the AIC's creation, the BIA organized the American Indian Club as part of their activities and leisure program and operated on Chicago's north side at Chase Park and at Ogden Park on the south side (LaGrande,

2002:138). The creation of this club was to help assimilate newly relocated Indians into socialize more through leisure activities. Dreifuss (Director of the BIA relocation office) and the BIA Citizens Advisory Board decided to create a more permanent center for the club and as a central place to reach more Indians living in Chicago. It should be noted that while the intent was to promote a sense of community and socialization for the relocated Indians in Chicago, there was also an underlying move to assimilate the relocatees into the mainstream society. When the All Tribes American Indian Center held its first meeting in 1953, members of existing Indian organizations including The Indian Council Fire, First Daughters of America, and the American Indian Club attended (LaGrande, 2002:138). While the BIA played a role in the Center's origins, many of the Indians in Chicago, both relocated and existing, took a major role in determining the role and vision of the Center. Many did not like or trust the BIA and many openly criticized the Relocation Program.

Early on there were financial issues, especially financial issues, the by-laws and non-profit status, and relations with the BIA. The disagreements with the BIA focused on how to best assist relocates. The BIA wanted to promote assimilation, while the Indian membership and board members wanted to promote and maintain the tribal traditions of the new arrivals (Garbarino, 1973:80; Mucha, 1983:353). This worried Driefuss and as the Center moved its focus against the BIA, there were attempts to shut down the Center. Driefuss created the Kenmore Uptown Center to maintain the BIA presence in the community, but this did not last (LaGrande, 2002:138-144). The American Indian Center would become an Indian owned and operated organization by the early 1960s.

But despite these disagreements the AIC remained true to its mission to provide social support and service to the Indian community, and produced monthly powwows, Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners, an inter tribal dance club, social nights, traditional arts, a newsletter, and held meetings in regards to social service needs (AIC: Chicago Urban Records, NAES College Archives; Fixico, 2000: 133; LaGrand, 2002: 137-144; Mucha, 1983:351). The Center, like the Indian Fellowship League, represented a large amount of diverse tribes within the organization, a diversity not really seen at the time. Tribal clubs emerged, along with various tribal and social networks. The Center became a place for Indians to go for services and socializing. Many of these activities still go on and the newsletter now can be accessed online and reaches a wider audience.

From 1958 to 1971, the AIC experienced tremendous growth in its activities. It added many youth programs, a canoe club, a Boy Scout troop, a women's club, and an advisory board of past board members was created (Mucha, 1983:359-362). Many of these activities were inter-tribal, but there were also tribal specific activities. In 1962, the Winnebago Club emerged to teach the Hočąk language and culture to tribal members living in Chicago (Mucha, 1983:360; LaGrande, 2002:219; Beck, 2002:300). Other tribal clubs were the Lakota/Sioux Club (1965), the Six Nations Club (1966), the Council of Three Fires (Ojibwe, Pottawatomie, and Menominee) (1968), the Oneida Club (1969), the Southwest Intertribal Club, and the Choctaw Club (LaGrande, 2002:219; Mucha, 1983:360). The Center governing board was stable and eventually moved into a larger building in 1967 (its present location), to house the many of the new programs. This move also added to the sense of permanency for the community. It also placed the AIC in the heart of the Indian community (Beck, 2002:300).

The AIC went thru a transition period in 1971. When the Executive Director of AIC, Robert Reitz, died, the Center was thrust into a period of infighting, especially with a new organization, the Native American Committee (NAC) (Mucha, 1983:162; Lagrande, 2002:228). This group believed that the AIC was not providing adequate services to the younger and poor members of the community and they stressed educational needs (LaGrande, 2002:228; Sorkin, 1978:112). In much the same tradition as previous community organizations, NAC provided support in adult education. Eventually the first urban Indian college emerged out of the need to provide education to youth and adults from a Native perspective. The 1971-72 split was the source of much stress in the community and factionalism, but there were some positive elements also. First, it demonstrated the scope of urban Indian needs that was wider than one organization could handle. Second, it provided community members to experiment with new programs and ideas for community development. Some of the off-shoots would fail, but others like Native American Educational Services College, would fill in niches in the community that were needed.

In terms of religious activities, the American Indian Center would house an Indian Baptist congregation and provide a space for traditional ceremonies to be held. In the Center's early years, the Chicago Archdiocese (Roman Catholic) and the Church Federation of Greater Chicago (Protestant) played active roles in attending to the spiritual needs of Indians who followed the Christian faiths. However, many Indians rejected the Church Federation's single-mindedness on integrating into the mainstream society and the Archdiocese found many Indian Catholics (the majority Christian denomination) were nominal Catholics at best (LaGrande, 2002:148-49). Many Protestant Indians attended

the American Indian Bible Church, which had no connection to the Church Federation (LaGrande, 2002:149). An Indian Baptist congregation existed at the American Indian Center during the late 1950s and early 1960s (AIC: Chicago Urban Records, NAES College Archives). The congregation held services every Sunday and was comprised of Indians from Oklahoma and the South. After being replaced as Director of the American Indian Center, Thomas Segundo (Papago) joined the congregation who was attempting to overtake the Center's leadership. The group did not succeed and was kicked out of the AIC. This congregation however provided another alternative to the Church Federation. In the early 1970s, a Christian group known as the "Church People" would be involved in a controversy involving the finances of the American Indian Center (LaGrande, 2002:231).

Traditional spirituality exists at the AIC along side Christian beliefs. The members from the Hočąk community maintained a Midéwiwin Lodge and by the mid 1960s, the Native American Church established itself within the community (LaGrande, 2002:150). Traditional spirituality became more common as the years moved on since the mid 1960's. In a conversation with a Lakota/Diné community member, he recalled how he attended Lakota *Uwipi* (healing) ceremonies in the tribal hall in the 1980s, his father and other Lakota and members of other tribes (mostly Siouan speakers). In the 1990s, a Lakota family conducted public pipe ceremonies when they were needed and during the New Years Eve Powwow. Currently, Jack Campbell (Menominee), a follower of the Midéwiwin, holds weekly pipe ceremonies at the American Indian Center. All people and tribes are welcome, as the ceremony is for healing and if someone follows the pipe or feels they need help, they are welcomed.

The American Indian Center has always provided a space for Indians to express their spiritual beliefs, both Christian and Traditional. This is not to say that divineness did not occur. On a surface level divisions would form along religious lines and many of the religious activity were often tribal specific or closed to outsiders (LaGrande, 2002:150-151). In the mid 1990s, the American Indian Center enacted new anti-drug and alcohol policies, which eventually lead to the Native American Church ending their meetings at the AIC. This upset many Native American Church members, as they believe the use of peyote as a sacred act, unrelated to the recreational drug and alcohol use that the policies were intended to discourage. The Native American Church however found a new location and conducted their meetings at NAES College. Regardless of the policy issue, its members still attended AIC events and functions and held funeral rites at the Center. While on the surface, it would seem these issues were targeting certain religious activities, but when examined on a deeper level, the heart of the divisions often had more to do with political control, personal disputes among community members, or changes in organizational policies. Many religious activities were also closed off or “invite only” due to the tribal or family specific nature of the belief structure. Nevertheless there were also ceremonies that were, and still are, open to the public. Numerous wakes and feasts are held at the American Indian Center and vary from tribal specific rituals and practices to general community wide practices. Wakes are the moments that one encounters the beliefs of the deceased and their family. For example, when followers of the Midéwiwin and Native American Church hold wakes and memorial feasts, they are open to the public and provide an opportunity for many in the community who do not follow those beliefs to see it and experience it with those who do. Death is an equalizer and in many instances



provides a forum for all members of the Chicago Indian community to gather and share (despite the poignant nature of the ceremonies).

The perceived closed-off nature of ceremonies probably has less to do with one tribe or group being exclusive and more to do with social networks and general interest of the participants. Ceremonies like First Laugh (Diné) or bundle opening ceremonies (multiple tribes) are performed in the presence of family members only, and is technically closed off to others in the community. It comes down to a question of relevance. Those not from the family or tribe may not understand the relevance and purpose of the ceremony. There is a cultural complex at play when it comes to ceremonies. The spiritual belief systems of many tribes are deeply interconnected within the culture and cosmology of their tribes. Thus one can attend a ceremony but may not understand the symbols and meanings of the rituals. One does not just jump in and do it or instantly get it. It takes time to understand what is going on and why. Ceremonies are a process of cultural learning over time. So the feeling of being closed off or private may have more to do with the lack of understanding of what is going on. It should also be noted that these ceremonies, whether Christian or Traditional, are held in high regard by many in the community and they are an important part of their identity. So if people seem protective or stand-offish, it is more of a way of saying, “this is important, you are welcome, but please respect it.” When ceremonies such as funerary rites and feasts happen, the beliefs of community members become visible and become events that reunite individuals, and community.

*St. Augustine’s Center for the American Indian:*

St. Augustine's Center for the American Indian is currently the second longest running Indian organization in Chicago. It is also an interesting organization in that while it is a religious institution, its focus was more on providing social services than proselytizing. The services they provided included job training, emergency cash, groceries, soup kitchen, counseling, adoption and legal counsel, and emergency services for housing and health (LaGrande, 2002:144-45; Sorkin, 1978:116-17). The center was created in 1954 and like the American Indian Center, grew out of existing programs. Father Peter Powell, an Anglo Catholic/Episcopalian priest at St. Timothy's Parish on Chicago's Northwest side, created the center. He had an interest in American Indian history and has work extensively with the Cheyenne and Lakota tribes in South Dakota and Montana. As he learned more about the spiritual beliefs of the Cheyenne and Lakota, he saw parallels between Christianity and those beliefs. This is a view he maintains today and has a strong influence on how he conducts services at St. Augustine's, which include the use of the Cheyenne language within the liturgy. He has an extensive background as a historian for the Cheyenne and Lakota, served as a councilman for the Northern Cheyenne tribe in the 1960s and was given the charge of the sacred pipe bundle (which is still housed at St. Augustine's) (Fr. Peter Powell, 2008).

In 1954, he created the Native American Assistance Center at St. Timothy's. The center was to help newly arriving Indians to Chicago and provide support to individuals and families (LaGrande, 2002:144). During this time, he joined the Church Federation of Greater Chicago and became a strong advocate for reforming BIA policies regarding Relocation. He also printed *The Cross and the Calumet* which was a newsletter that focused on Indian issues in Chicago and the United States (LaGrande, 2002:144; St.

Augustine's: Chicago Urban Records, NAES College Archives). By 1961 he created the Committee on American Indian Work for the (Episcopal) Diocese of Chicago, which later that year would become St. Augustine's Center for the American Indian. Powell looked to St. Timothy's for support for the center. They would help on the condition that the center was also used to evangelize the Episcopalian faith. Interestingly, Fr. Powell rejected the notion of evangelizing and felt that meeting the social needs of the American Indian community was more important (Fr. Powell, 2008). Powell believed that there was no need to proselytize to Indians as they had their own faiths. As a result, St. Augustine's received no financial support from the Episcopal Diocese

St. Augustine's Center for the American Indian has held daily morning mass since its doors opened and is open to Indian and non-Indians, regardless of faith. The chapel at St. Augustine's reflects the blending of Native and Christian beliefs. When the Center opened, Cheyenne artist Richard West donated a Cheyenne Christ sculpture, that still stands and a local Ojibwe artist as a gift to the Center created the altar itself. The chapel contains other items donated to the Center. The congregation at St. Augustine's is very loyal and is made up of three generations of Chicago Indians and contains both Christian and Traditional members. For many, St. Augustine's is not just a religious or social service organization, but a place where they can worship and socialize with other Indians and find support in times of need. Historically speaking, St. Augustine's has always been seen as a social service center and the place to go for help. Most important, members are allowed to express their Native identities.

*The ANAWIM Center (The Chicago Kateri Center as of 2010):*

The ANAWIM Center emerged as part of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago's Ethnic Ministries. In 1982, a group of American Indian elders living in Chicago joined with two Sinsinawa Dominican nuns to open a prayer center. In the language of the Hebrew Scriptures, "ANAWIM" refers to people who are humble, those who have suffered a loss, and those who have been taken from their land (Ramirez, 2007). The center (at the time of this research) occupied a space in the City of Chicago's Institute of Cultural Affairs alongside other ethnic community offices within the Uptown neighborhood. It offers a variety of programs from religious and youth programs to health care assistance. ANAWIM also houses the Ministry of Presence Among American Indians (Methodist) and works with the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ).

Unlike St. Augustine's which was created as a social service provider, ANAWIM's purpose was to meet the religious needs of Catholics in the Indian community and is also supported by the Catholic Archdiocese. The focus of the center is predominantly religious, but it has provided some social services when staffing and resources were available. ANAWIM is managed by the Chicago Roman Catholic Archdiocese and primarily serves Catholics, but non-Catholic Indians also use it as a place to speak their native language, honor elders, and preserve Indian culture (Ramirez, 2007). The vision of the center is to integrate Christian and Traditional ways of prayer and worship ([http://www.anawimcenter.org/about\\_us](http://www.anawimcenter.org/about_us)). To say it is a Catholic organization is both true and false. The center in many ways practices a folk or Indianized Roman Catholic ritual. Sitting in on many of the masses and being familiar with Catholic ritual, the services in structure are Catholic, but the delivery and additions

reflect the heritage of the various tribes of its congregation. Many of the congregation are Catholic, but there are also congregants from various Protestant and Traditional belief systems. On the Catholic side, they celebrate the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Marriage, Reconciliation, and Anointing of the Sick. ANAWIM currently serves 250 families in the community (Ramirez, 2007).

The Traditional activities that happen at the center can vary between family or tribal based practices to multi-tribal, community wide activities. The All Nations Indian Prayer Circle occurs on a weekly basis and is a space for community members of all religions and beliefs to come together for prayer or meditation. I sat in on a few of these meetings during my fieldwork and they are very different from the usual Catholic ritual in that there is less structured ritual. Instead, it begins with smudging and in a clockwise fashion, each participant either states what's on their mind or what they are praying for, while others may keep their prayers to themselves. An eagle feather is passed around for people to hold as they pray and is passed to the next one when they are finished. The lengths of time for this can vary depending on how many attend and what people are praying for. Sometimes people discuss issues that are affecting them and in some ways the prayer circle becomes a community forum to bring to light events that are happening in their life. People connect with others on both a spiritual level and community level. ANAWIM also hosts traditional healers and practitioners who make visits to the community.

ANAWIM is a spiritual center that meets the needs of both the Christian and Traditional spiritual aspects of the community. It is not uncommon for a Lakota pipe ceremony to occur on a Saturday and a full Catholic mass on Sunday in the same room.

The use of the center's space can vary from ceremony to ceremony, but always remains a sacred area. One thing that is common after all ceremonies is a feast. Regardless of what belief or practice is being performed or focused on, the ritual is never finished until there is a feast. The feast is the final portion of many rituals in the traditional beliefs of many of the tribes of the Midwest. In some cases, the feast is the ceremony. The feast is something that all of ANAWIM's congregation and the community have in common. The ending feast is the common space that unifies, rebuilds, and/or strengthens community bonds.

ANAWIM and St. Augustine's congregations come together on major Christian holidays such as Easter. The services are held in the tribal hall of the American Indian Center and are conducted by Father Powell and Father Bob (the priest who helped ANAWIM at the time of the research). The service itself can best be described as an ecumenical event. It combines Anglo-Catholic and Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, and Native American practices. The barriers between all of these beliefs are broken down and produce an Indianized Christian ceremony. But religious and spiritual differences aside, the interfaith mass unifies multiple beliefs, tribes, and congregations. As community elder Angie Decorah (Hočąk) told a reporter; "The bonds between us are deep. We are all American Indians and there is a good feeling when I am among my people" (Ramirez, 2007). Both ANAWIM and ST. Augustine's, technically Christian in theory, are more like Indian organizations that meet the spiritual needs of the community and over the years have adapted to community needs. A good example is the use and incorporation of the Diné, Lakota, and Ojibwe languages in the mass, as many in the community would like to maintain and promote the use of their tribal languages.

### *Organizations Evolve:*

Even with both centers (AIC and St. Augustine's) operating simultaneously, not all needs were filled, as both had specific foci. St. Augustine's was predominantly a social service agency, while the AIC balanced both social services, public outreach, social, and cultural support. Educational, economic development and medical needs could not necessarily be met due to limited funding. The AIC would be plagued with various financial and high employee and membership turnovers throughout the 1970s, the 80s would usher in a new period of successful leaders who continued the process of reconciling urban life and Indian identity (LaGrande, 2002:246).

After the 1971-72 split, new organizations appeared to fulfill needs in education, public health, business develop, and after school programs. In many ways, it was inevitable for new organizations to be created to meet the current needs of the community. Educational issues were now being met by a Native owned and operated college (Native American Educational Services College created in 1973-74), a grade school magnet program at Audubon Elementary, along with various parent committees (Beck, 2002:303-304; LaGrande, 2002:246; NAES and Audubon Files: Chicago Urban Records, NAES College Archives; Good, 2002:342-353). In 1976, American Indian Health Services was established to assist in community health (IHS Files: Chicago Urban Records, NAES College Archives).

In 1980, a conference of Chicago Indian organizations met at NAES College to unite and tackle new issues and needs facing the community, and to bring the various organizations together to promote community networking (CAICOC Collection: NAES

College Archives). It was successful in its attempts to rebuild community relations, with itself and with the greater Chicago area. Again, new organizations came out of this, namely the American Indian Economic Development Association, which focused on building a network of Native owned business in the Chicago land area.

The 1990s, a coalition of some eighteen Chicago Indian organizations was created in the late 90s. It was called the Coalition of Chicago American Indian Community Organizations (CCAICO) and was created to voice the concerns and issues of the Chicago and statewide Indian communities to the Illinois State Government. Each organization maintained its uniqueness and independence, but stood by each other when dealing with the city and state governments. The coalition was based on traditional tribal coalition governance and Decisions were made by consensus. What came of this was the building of strong relationship with the State of Illinois, and the community also found political allies in Polish and Mexican communities. Today the coalition is no more, but the community has increased its influence with the city and state governments.

With the reemergence of the AIC, tribal specific clubs were restarted and the visible presence of spiritual practices began to re-emerge. While the intertribal nature of the major Chicago Indian institutions can provide services on a broad scale, an individual's tribal identity and tribal specific needs may not be met. Also tribal and clan identity are important for many tribal groups. The AIC, while not tribal specific, provides a venue for tribal groups to meet. Two clubs in particular, the Menominee Community Center of Chicago and the Hoçąk community would turn from social clubs to full on political entities within the city. In 1993, the Hoçąk Nation opened a tribal office in Chicago to provide services and assistance its membership living in the Chicago area



(Dall, et al, 2002:337-341). In the Menominee case, the initiative came from Menominee living in Chicago. In 1994, the Menominee Social Club of Chicago (MSCC) emerged to build social networks among Menominee tribal members living in Chicago and served as a referral agency for social services (Harvard, 2003:32). By 1996, the Menominee Tribal Government became aware of the work of the MSCC and officially recognized the newly renamed Menominee Community Center of Chicago (Harvard, 2003:32). Through collective actions of the Menominee and Hočąk communities, they were able to bridge the social and political gaps between their reservations and urban communities (Alfonso, 2002:372). They also maintain the relationships between intertribal and tribal institutions.

Indian controlled institutions in Chicago have had a tradition of putting the needs and culture (in all aspects) of the community first. The maintenance of culture and identity has been the defining force behind community development (Beck, 2002:294). The present community is experiencing an upturn in activity that began in 1995 and has worked its way up from obscurity to statewide and national standing and the community was featured in the “Our Lives” exhibit at National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. If anything can be said about the community institutions, it is that they have grown through time and those that have persisted have learned to adapt to the changing needs and voice of Chicago’s American Indians.

Community organizations help in the preservation of urban Indian identity in Chicago. Many of the basic needs have persisted from the inception of the earliest institutions such as social and political advocacy, cultural preservation, and the agency to support a community voice and control in its own affairs. However, this identity is not simply a generic pan-Indianism but a multi-layered identity, made up of individual, tribal,

clan, religious, organizational, and community personas. Chicago Indian community institutions, whether inter-tribal or tribal, provide outlets for expression of each of these personas.

### **Social Networks:**

While community organizations provide the outlets and spaces for members of the Chicago American Indian to interact, social networks are in many ways the glue that keeps the organizations together. Through social networks people in and outside of the community know where to go for particular services or needs. The networks themselves can vary or be a combination of familial, peer, organizational, neighborhood, or tribal. Through these networks, religious and spiritual information can be passed along to those who practice or follow varying beliefs. Whether it is attending Anishinabe or Hočąk Midéwiwin ceremonies, Native American Church meetings, finding churches with Indian congregants, tribal specific and multi-tribal sweats, or finding a source for ceremonial resources (botanical or faunal), the social networks within the community help individuals and families find what they need. Social networking was of extreme importance during the early history of the Chicago Indian community, especially during the relocation period (1950-1975).

As many American Indians found their way into Chicago and other urban centers, their transition from reservation/rural to urban life was at times easy or difficult depending on their personal circumstances. Garbarino noted that

“Accommodation to urban life...seems to be highly individualistic and personalized. The accommodation factor is extremely difficult to measure, for two people of seemingly identical experience and background may react very differently to the city environment. If there is stability in the household, a strong

family head, and a regular income, adjustment problems are usually either minor or nonexistent (Garbarino, 1973:202).”

Garbarino found this factor of familial support and individual resilience, or lack thereof, to be important to adapting to city life. Sorkin notes that many Navajos who fared well in the cities of California did so because they had a high self-esteem along with a good familial and cultural base in their new surroundings (Sorkin, 1978:133). Social networks and kinship helped many Native people adapt to urban life and succeed. While there are different tribes how moved to urban centers, kinship and tribal networking structures provided the basis for many to adapt to life in the city. The kinship system was the most useful index of social integration regarding Indian society in cities, but the family unit became the key element to this process (Fixico, 2000:45). Family units are universal to all tribes and became a common ground for people of different tribes to find support.

Joan Ablon noted that

“A positive continuing sense of personal and social identity is the chief factor in social segregation of Indians. The fact of identity seems to determine the choice of looking to Indian groups to find one’s friends (Sorkin, 1978:133).”

Jean Ablon found that Indians placed in cities would find the support, both cultural and social, that they were accustomed to amongst the various urban Indian social networks (Ablon, 1964; 1971).

Susan Lobo examined the women of the Bay area American Indian community who head homes that are host to various community activities such as temporary housing, health and healing practices, advice, ceremonial activities, emotional and spiritual support, transportation, and communication resources (Lobo, 2003:505). These women are dubbed urban clan mothers because they provide and act as a stabilizing force within

the Oakland/San Francisco Indian community. They are the domestic force within the group that maintains tradition and continuity. In many ways, Lobo's study of key female community members and their homes is important in regards to the Chicago Indian community, because it is in the home that much of the ceremonial activities take place. In terms of sacred places and spaces in the Chicago Indian community, the home can be considered as equally as sacred as a church or sites such as Bear Butte or Devil's Tower. The home transforms into a sacred space, albeit temporary, to perform important ceremonies in urban communities, insuring community members can maintain their religious practices and the sense of spirituality, while being far from their home communities.

Urban Indian communities are not set-up in ethnic enclaves or neighborhoods, but instead exist through a system of relations that connect members of the same tribe, clan, family with those of other tribes and rural/reservation communities. Lobo notes that these communities are structured on a tribal model, not a European (or more precisely, an American nuclear model) model (Lobo, 2003:508). For many, this system was brought with them from their reservation and rural homelands, and was probably all they knew. This is no different from other ethnic and immigrant communities (Orsi, 1999; Fienstein, 1971; Greeley and McCready, 1975, di Leonrado, 1984; Karnups, 1980; McKibben, 2006). Sorkin, Hurt, Price, and Krutz noted that in their research, he found that Lakota, Choctaws, Navajos, and Kiowas maintained the ethnic tribal identities and established traditional kinship support networks between the cities they moved to and their home communities (Sorkin, 1978:131, 134-135; Hurt, 1962; Krutz, 1973; Price, 1968). Lakota and Dakota living in Rapid City often helped out relatives when asked; Navajos living in

San Francisco would associate predominantly with other Navajo; and Kiowa living in Los Angeles retained and imported their own tribal social system into the new urban environment (Sorkin, 1978:131-132). In all, Sorkin found that many Native Peoples who moved into urban areas have resisted much of the attempts of assimilation and have remained separate from the mainstream (Sorkin, 1978:136). Despite not having a designated neighborhood, urban Indians were able to network with others through these organizations. Thus, urban Indian organizations played and still play a crucial role in adapting and navigating life in the city. Lobo (2003) and Straus and Valentino (2003) found that urban Indian communities in many ways reflect pre-reservation and contact period Indian communities and favor towards traditional structural characteristics. Lobo summarizes this by stating:

“Urban Indian communities are not bound by geographical boundaries as a reservation community is, the community itself may exhibit physical fluidity to expand and contract as resources become available, to move into resource-rich niches and to reflect seasonal opportunities. Also in urban areas social and political boundaries are less rigid and more fluid than on reservations because, for example, membership is not tied exclusively to blood quantum or genealogical criteria. Nor is there a formal overarching political structure, equivalent to a tribal council that governs the entire urban community (Lobo, 2003:510).”

Fluidity in community structure allows many urban Indians to adapt and innovate to changes in the urban environment. The Mi'kmaq of Boston provide a good example of how a single tribe maintains its identity utilizing and adapting its traditional social and kinship structures to meet the needs of living in Boston (Guillemin, 1975). Key to this are the maintenance of social structures and networks. In a multi-tribal context, fluidity becomes more important in maintaining these structures. Different tribes have different social and cosmological structures, and in urban Indian communities there is some degree

of adaption to meet the particular social needs within the community. Crucial is finding the common ground between diverse and divergent tribes. In a multi-tribal, urban community the role of family takes on meanings beyond the mainstream notion of the nuclear unit, but is expanded to include blood and non-blood relatives, friends, fellow tribal members, tribes of the same region, or community organizations.

*Gaagiigidoo Nibii Wan (the water speaks): Gender and Social Networks:*

Susan Lobo examined this idea of family and gender roles in social networking, when she observed the role of influential community women in the Bay Area Indian community. The urban clan mothers provided a secure base for these individuals to sleep, eat, conduct financial responsibilities, and have a communication center. Many of the women who take on this role are long time residents and live in permanent homes. They open their homes to community members in need but also act as role models, teachers, counselors, or carry out spiritual responsibilities.

Gender and social networks played and still play a role in community organizing in Chicago. The earlier Chicago organizations from 1919 to 1965 were organized and lead predominantly by men (with the exception of the First Daughters of America), but by the mid-1960s, a shift occurred from male dominated leadership to an increase in female community leaders. The rise of women in paid leadership positions coincided with the rise of college enrollment among Native women (Straus and Valentino, 2003:531). The trend shifted again in the 1970s and 1980s when community leadership between men and women is equal. The trend in the 1990s then shifted back to male dominated leadership. These trends were linked in some cases to economic conditions,

education, and in other aspects to traditional male leadership roles (Straus and Valentino, 2003:525-528). Education is an important factor in this process. In the early 1960s, many of the college graduates were men, but by the end of the 1960s up into the early 1990s, the rate of women with college degrees increased, while males have decreased (Straus and Valentino, 2003:531). One explanation for the current rise of male leadership is a correlation to the fact that the men in power are the children of women leaders of the past. As such, many of the male leaders today grew up in an environment of community leadership activity. Issues of income availability of jobs also played a role as to whether men or women took leadership positions. If job options for men outside the community are better than inside, then men will take those, women then fill in the void. Straus and Valentino conclude that

“If economics and adjustment to employment and income issues contributes significantly to the regularization of leadership in terms of gender today, we must predict that men will begin, now, to disappear again from official positions of leadership in community organizations. They will return to jobs that allow them to support their families, while women once again step in to keep things going in the community (Straus and Valentino, 2003:532).”

However, while men may be in the visible leadership positions at certain points, women were and are heavily active in the unseen areas such as the initiation of organizations and programs, board membership, and advisory committees and there has been a consistent trend of women in leadership positions in urban Indian communities. It tends to be a common thing to focus on the visible leadership, but sometimes the unseen workings of community organizations and social networks reveals a larger set of players. And within the Chicago and other urban Indian communities, women play major roles in community development. While women as heads of community organizations fluctuates through

time, women in the Chicago Indian community have always played key leadership roles.

For example:

“The predominance of women in community work is not unique to the Indian community. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, most community work throughout the city was done by women. Community work was family focused and child friendly; many became involved in it as a way to improve life for their children. Much of the work is voluntary (Straus and Valentino, 2003:531).”

Women have also taken a major leadership role in spiritual matters. In 1996, a group of women from the community decided to gather and pray for the community as a group. The Women’s Solstice group in Chicago evolved out of a collective effort by various groups. This activity was developed as an active response by a community Anishinabe grandmother to a question that was posed to her entire community by a spiritual elder (Mandamin, 2008:1). What began as an individual effort to improve the quality of water had blossomed into a tribal wide activity and event. The Mother Earth Walk was created to reestablish and reassert the traditional cultural and spiritual role of Anishinabek women in regards to water.

“Anishinabe women across the Great Lakes basin have a traditional indigenous role of stewards, caretakers and managers of the water, life-giving blood of mother earth. As a result of colonization, forced assimilation and genocide, there has been a lack of ownership, engagement and involvement of Anishinabe women in pollution, political and water management decision-making in the Great Lakes Region of the United States and Canada (Mandamin, 2008:1).”

The walk promoted the idea of clean water, a sense of responsibility to nature, expose and disseminate information about current water issues, and to recognize the importance of water and urgency to maintain a healthy water supply for future generations (<http://www.walkforthewater.org/>). Another goal of the Mother Earth Walk was to



network with other Native communities across the U.S. and Canada, to participant, whether a walk or some other kind of public event or ceremony to raise awareness about water issues and reconnecting people to cultural views of water. For the women of the Chicago community, the Mother Earth Walk would take the form of a sunrise ceremony conducted four times a year at each solstice and equinox.

Rosalyn LaPier (Piegan/Little Shell Chippewa) coordinated for the Women's Leadership Project at Native American Educational Services College, was contacted by the Mother Earth Walk group in 1998 (Rosalyn LaPier, 2009). The Women's Leadership Project was a monthly event in which women from the community would discuss issues that were impacting the community and Native communities across the country. It was decided by the women in this group to participate in some way to show solidarity with Anishinabe elders and community members in the upper Great Lakes. There wasn't a clear plan regarding what should be done, as each community would recognize this day in their own way. Julia Brownwolf (Hunkpapha Lakota) noted that in the beginning, many of the women had a mixed level of knowledge regarding the spiritual traditions on an individual level. But on a group level, the women who participated, and still participate, represented a great breadth of knowledge of various tribal traditions (Julia Brownwolf, 2006). It was decided to conduct a sunrise ceremony to greet the new sun and pray for the health of the waters and for the community. The sunrise ceremony is something that was common to many of the tribal traditions of the women who participated including Ojibwe, Blackfeet, Dakota, Lakota, Menominee, and Oneida.

The first ceremony was held on the winter solstice. Other groups across the country were also participating in support of the Water Walk on that day. It was

incredible cold that morning, but everyone was serious about the ceremony, so the cold was of little concern, as each woman present contributed prayers in the tradition of each of their respective tribes. The women who participated in the first Sunrise Ceremony felt a great sense of unity and a transcendent feeling by participating in an event that linked women from the Chicago Indian community to other Native communities across the nation. It was agreed upon that they would do this ceremony again at each equinox and solstice. The sunrise ceremony ends that morning with the placing of the ashes from the cedar, tobacco, and sage into the lake, usually done by male participants. The prayers that are associated with the ashes are placed into the water to carry them to ancestors and to re-establish the relationship people have to the great lakes, its inhabitants, and to water in general. Associated activities and rituals connected to the Solstice Group include voluntary fasting for the four days before the equinox or solstice, men's and women's talking circles, and group or solitary prayers.

There is also a feast at the end of the four day ceremony. The feast is truly an important part of the ceremony, not only because it marks the end of the ceremony, but because it unifies the participants and other community members who attend. The feasts I have attended can vary at times. For example, the first feast I attended in the late 1990's was at sunset and it was a potluck. The food that was served reflected the traditional foods of Midwestern tribes and stressed in many ways the importance of maintaining traditional diets and eating healthy. At this type of feast, which has been held at the American Indian Center, men are given the responsibility of serving the women. There is a portion of the feast where participants reflect on the past four days, sharing their thoughts and what they have learned from the experience.

At other times, the feast may be at a restaurant. For example, on the last day of the 2008 winter solstice, the group of us had the feast at the Golden Nugget pancake house. The Golden Nugget out of practical reasons, as one of the participants had to leave that afternoon and also, that was a cold morning with temperatures reaching -20 degrees. We were cold. But more importantly, the feast cannot really happen if not all of the participants are there. Essentially, the participants start together and finish together.

The ceremony evolved from being part of an activity organized by an outside entity to one that became localized and personalized by members of the Chicago Indian community. In many ways this act of localizing and adapting the event to a Chicago community context reflects some of the goals of the Mother Earth Walk/Walk for the Water, as the Women's Solstice Group re-establishes their and the community's relationship to water and raises awareness about water issues, it connects men and women of various ages in the community, and connects with women who moved from Chicago, who keep the ceremony with them. The Chicago Women's Solstice group also promotes and maintains certain prayer and core values and beliefs of the individual participant's tribe(s).

The Women's Solstice Group is a public context where members of different tribes and traditions can learn about each other and simultaneously build a strong support network. It should be noted that while everyone who participated learned and at times took part in the other tribal traditions, people maintained their own tribal identities and perspectives. Megan Bang (Ojibwe/Italian) noted:

“...one thing that we did do is that we went to someone's home. So, you know, every night we used to go to somebody's house, and so we would honor their family traditions. And it wasn't that we necessarily did exactly what they would

do. So, if we went to Debbie's, it's not like we didn't necessarily do exactly what she would do in the Longhouse... There were small differences in protocols that we just navigated. And a lot of times, what we ended up doing is we honored the protocols of the person's home we were in. And that didn't mean that someone would take all their teachings from the Longhouse, for example, and do them with us because we still navigated and sort of developed something, I think, that was in the group that worked for the group. But if there were specific things that really mattered to that home, then we would honor those things.... if all of us start being in ceremony with each other and navigating through those intertribal comforts in some ways, we start to build a more cohesive community for our kids that are being raised here (Megan Bang, 2007)."

The group looked at what the similarities were between the tribes that were present among the participants as a starting point to figure out what the group would do (Julia Brownwolf, 2006). This process allowed many to reflect on their own traditions, while simultaneously learning how the traditions of other tribes are similar and different, and the slight nuances that illuminate the core beliefs and cosmologies of each tribe, and their uniqueness. The solstice group is not pan-Indian in its practices, but more importantly pan-community in its purpose. The Solstice group connects various communities and individuals within and outside the community. Pam Silas (Menominee/Oneida) noted that when the women gather at Foster Beach for each solstice and equinox, there are women (who used to live in Chicago) at different parts of the country that will do the ceremony for the four days, starting and finishing at the same time as the women in Chicago. During one fall equinox in 2009, Jasmine Alfonso, Pam's Daughter, (Oneida/Menominee/Argentinean) did her morning prayer on the airplane, as she was flying to Albuquerque. So the ceremony is place based as it happens at the same spot in Chicago, but it is simultaneously community and individual based, as it can be performed anywhere and can be adapted in accordance to the individual's surrounding. This may be

a reason why this particular practice within the Chicago Indian community has maintained itself, because it reaffirms community connections and provides a forum for people to practice their traditional beliefs. The Solstice Group generates a sense of identity as Chicago Indians, reaffirms tribal identity, and facilitates the personal growth and development in a spiritual sense.

The subtle roles that various members of the community play, specifically middle-aged women, the nature of urban Indian mobility and population dynamics; and ultimately, the various complexities of urban Indian communities, especially in terms of relationship networks. Within the colloquial language of the community, spatial references help people determine where others will be for events, support, or other activities (Lobo, 2001:75). These spatial foci are where people create and maintain a wide array of social and cultural networks (Lobo, 2001:76). Of these geographical transaction points, the homes of these Urban Clan Mothers are part of a larger network of geographic social transaction points within the Bay Area Indian community. Di Leonardo found a similar situation among Italian-American women in California di Leonardo, 1984:191-218). Weibel-Orlando notes the importance of women in maintaining ritual and ceremonial structures and organization for community events and services (Weibel-Orlando, 1999:163-176).

Women in community leadership positions, both in organizations and social networks may demonstrate the maintenance of traditional roles in the educational, economic, and social relationships within the community, whether spiritual or secular. Women in leadership positions, especially in terms of spirituality, may represent the core values of a community; its organizations as “home” and the various social networks as

“family.” Women in urban Indian communities maintain their traditional leadership roles as organizers, advocates, and custodians of sacred and cultural traditions. Women within urban Indian communities occupy an important role as the binding agents that hold many of the organizational, social and spiritual networks together.

### *Spiritual and Cultural Networks:*

Amongst the social nodes that exist, ceremonial and religious networks represent the linking of different nodes within the Chicago community. Many of the spiritual practices within the community are family based or centered. But these family centered practices, more often than not will extend to friend networks, tribal members in the city, and tribal members in home and other communities. This is summed up in the following excerpt from an interview with Nizhoni Hodge (Diné/Tsalagi).

**NH:** Oh, how would describe it (spiritual beliefs)? I would say it is learning and practicing traditional Navajo ways to the best of my family’s ability...Yes, it influences my everyday life. And I don’t know if you will talk about it later, but it has to do with prayer every morning. We have some medicines (Taa’a’diin), corn pollen, and I carry it with me...And we practice it within the family, mostly. There are community-wide events which attend, but they are more specific to the tribes in the area like Ojibwe.

### *INT: What kind of events?*

NH: Well recently, there have been naming ceremonies, sweats, and different feasts, or like lots of people celebrate the solstice and equinox with fasting and feasting. There are also people who do Native American Church in the city. For Navajo specific ceremonies, I haven’t really seen any in Chicago, besides like a lot of Navajos do Native American Church. And family ceremonies and blessings, like your child’s first laugh, things like that. Those types of ceremonies happen all the time.

### *INT: And that is just within the Navajo community in Chicago?*

**NH:** Yeah, and it's up to the family. It doesn't have to be anything to be taken home or anything like that. You can do those ceremonies at your house, when they happen.

There are people who travel home (rez) for specific ceremonies like Blackening ceremony, to cleansing ceremony, or to get special prayers made for them, or being doctored and things like that. Usually the resources are at home, like in Arizona and New Mexico. And people come back and carry on. It's like they have the tools, I guess. To practice the medicines that they need to stay healthy in the city. And there have also been bigger ceremonies like the coming of age ceremony for girls, the Kinaalda'. There have been (Navajo) ceremonies that Chicago community members attended in Michigan.

*INT: Why Michigan?*

**NH:** The family that was celebrating it, their daughter, lives in Michigan. So it is really, like no boundaries, when you start getting involved within the (Navajo) community, whether within the city limits or Wisconsin, Michigan, things like that, there are stronger ties. So we heard that they wanted to go through the whole process (Kinaalda'). I think they did it for 7 days, the whole process of making ... like get up every morning and run, you know there are different things that she has to do. So she had to grind corn, and everything. So they (the family) got the tools from home (Dinétah) to be able to do it in Michigan. So I think they live in Grand Rapids area. But we met the family going to powwows, and they are just social events, and we got involved with their family's ceremonies.

I guess for me, because the (Chicago) community has a lot of Ojibwe tribal members in it, so the resources for their ceremonies are more available, more so than a tribe that is a thousand miles away. But I don't mind it because my friends are part Ojibwe, so being a part of that ... I still think of it as strengthens my family (Hodge, 2006).

This excerpt illuminated something that is fairly common, but unseen within the community. People from the same tribe tend to keep in contact with each other. This tribal network can stretch throughout the city and into other states and the home reservation or community. But unless they are asked about, most people inside and outside of the community, will not know about them. Another important factor is choice. The religious ceremonies and rituals are available, whether or not they are accessed or utilized is dependent on if people chose to do them or not. If people are interested or feel ready to participate in tribal ceremonies, they will, and if they do not feel ready, then they

will hold off. Spirituality is something that many in the Chicago Indian community develop and reflect on, but when people feel ready, they will access the various tribal and ceremonial networks, and participate.

Father Powell noted that in the 1960s and 1970s, the religious networks of many Indians primarily existed within the Chicago area (Powell, 2008). However, as transportation options improved or became available, many people went back to their home communities or reservations for ceremonies. It's not that Chicago was not conducive for them, but that people's home communities is where their families are and the resources and people for the ceremonies are more readily available. However as people return to their home communities for ceremonies they usually bring back important items for others in the Chicago community who follow the same traditions.

The news of ceremonies in communities outside of Chicago is more often than not, passed along through word-of-mouth. People in the community who practice their tribal beliefs or are interested in learning keep in contact with each other. Ceremonies and sacred events develop their own communities within larger tribal and/or urban contexts. Accordingly, followers of the Anishinabe Midéwiwin will keep each other posted on ceremonial dates, believers of the Baha'i faith; maintain communication with other Baha'i communities, members of the Native American Church will notify others church members of ceremonies in Chicago and other parts of the country, and so on. All of this networking happens under the noses of many in and outside of the community. If a person chooses to be a part of any of these networks, then they will be aware of events. Spiritual networks can become very diverse and deep depending on the particular belief system, but are there to be accessed if one chooses.



### **Summary:**

Community organizations and social networks help preserve tribal identities and practices and can be places where members of the same tribe can meet and make connections. Through the stable and turbulent times, community organizations and social networks are fluid enough to adapt to changing community needs. But at the core of them is structure of tradition and cosmology that regulates the necessary innovations to meet pressures, but also maintains and reaffirms tribal ethnic identity and belief.

As Indians came to urban centers, urban Indian organizations provided a space for people to adapt to the new surroundings and more importantly, supported their cultural and social needs. But these organizations were built upon existing social networks that stretched from Chicago and across the country. The social and cultural transactions between organizations, social networks, tribes, families, and friends facilitated for many native people, a safety net in new environments and circumstances. From these hubs, Native people can maintain their traditions, while simultaneously innovating traditional social and political structures. This helps them adapt to the new situation but also invigorates the traditional structures. Adapting these structures and networks does not necessarily break the traditional structure but modernizes it to ensure that it lasts. Each generation adds something new to their tribe's or family's traditions. And if these adaptations and innovations are seen as heresies by some, as long as they stand the test of time and become reliable mechanisms to mitigate social and political flux, then they will become the basis of new traditions. But within all of the adaptations, there is an element of these structures remaining the same. The core values that define a group's identity and their cosmology provide home or center to return to in times of flux and change. Within

urban Indian communities, tribal people mitigate their identities by turning to their traditional tribal structures or at the most, other native people to succeed in urban centers. One thing that I have found in this research is that cosmology or world view is more often than not, the place where people can turn to for answers. Cosmologies provide a road map for interacting with the world around you and mitigate the bumps and fractures that appear along the way.

The urban Indian experience demonstrates the resiliency of Native Peoples in preserving you their tribal, familial, communal, and spiritual identities and most importantly expressing their choice in how they do it. Whether Native People maintain or let go of their tribal identities, it is through their own choice. For many urban Indians, they have chosen to maintain their identities through familial, tribal, communal, or native social networks. The next chapter will examine how Native Americans in Chicago have maintained their traditional practices, the adaptations, and the role of organizations and social networks in the preservation of these traditions. It will also examine spirituality as an active entity and mechanism for stability within the life of the community.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **DATA AND ANALYSIS**

The data for this research was collected over a period of three years from 2006 through summer of 2009. The research utilized a mixed method data collection including structured surveys, semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, and participant observations. The primary data for this research came from two structured surveys and forty-one personal interviews and examined through the lens of religion and spirituality to gain an understanding of individual and community perspectives of the sacred and its influence on the formation and maintenance of ethnic tribal identity. This chapter will present the data with discussions of the findings.

#### **Structured Surveys:**

The demographic information for the 2007 and 2008 surveys were combined, with forty-eight female and twenty male participants for both structured surveys. The age range was 18 years to 81 years old. Ages were divided into three cohorts; 18-30; 31-50; and 51+. The age cohorts represent a broader pattern of spiritual and tribal identity development that emerged from the interview data. The participants in the 31 and 50 year old range comprised 49% of the total number of survey participants, with 27% falling into the 51+ age group, and 24% in the 18-30 year old range. The greater participation of this cohort may be due to these age ranges being present in greater numbers at the events in which the survey was distributed. It may also indicate that people in these two cohorts were more willing to fill out the survey as compared to older community members. There

were instances when seniors were asked if they would like to participate, and many declined.

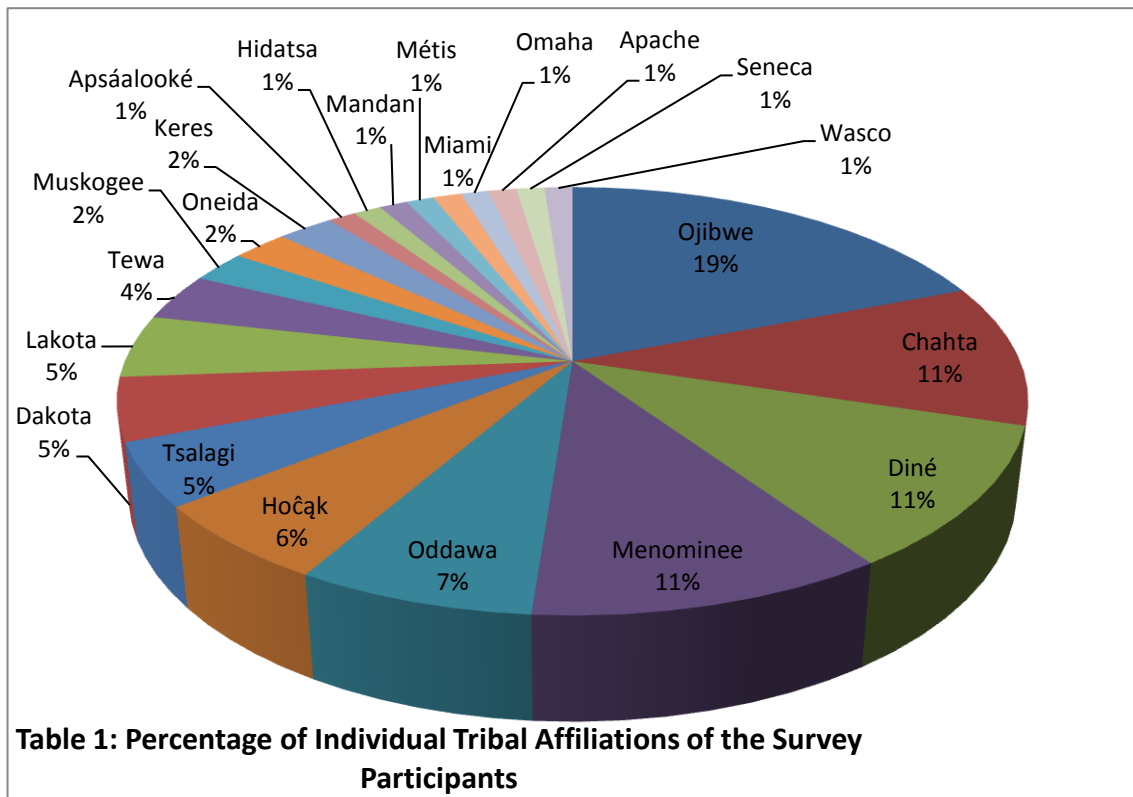
*Residency:*

Fifty-seven of the participants marked this question on the survey and eleven left no response, and Sixty-four of the participants lived in Chicago at the time of the survey. Two participants lived outside of Chicago in near-by cities. One lived in Moline and the other in Harvey, Illinois. One participant lives in Chicago part-time (work related). The participants' residency in Chicago ranged from two months to eighty-one years. The majority of people and their families (75%) have lived in Chicago between 21-50 years. Thirteen people indicated the years their families have lived in Chicago and fifty-four only indicated their own residency in the city. While the participants (or their families) of these surveys currently live in Chicago, not all were born there. Of the sixty-eight participants, thirty-nine were born in Chicago. The rest were born in other parts of Illinois such as Chicago suburbs, other states, and Canada. The participants represented a diverse background of both urban and rural/reservation upbringings. This data provides a background to the different environments the participants were raised and the various cultural and social experiences that have influenced their lives, especially regarding spirituality and tribal identity. The data also helps illuminate whether or not a rural or reservation background creates a different view of tribal and sacred identity than an urban background. As will be discussed later in this section, the responses indicated that a reservation or urban up bringing had little influence on their perspectives.

### *Tribal Affiliations:*

The tribal affiliations of the survey participants represented tribes from throughout the United States. The survey participants are self-identified, meaning that there was no checking for enrollment status. Velosos et al. noted that; “While it is not likely that all the Native Americans residing in Cook and Lake Counties are enrolled members of tribes, it is very difficult to estimate those that are and tribal enrollment is complicated by the fact that different tribes have different criteria for tribal membership (Veloso et al., 2004:16).” It is also important to note that the U.S. Bureau of the Census does not differentiate from enrolled or non-enrolled tribal status, and simply required individuals to self-identify as American Indian/Alaska Native (Velosos et al., 2004:16). The issue is focused less on ethnic tribal identity, but rather identification with a federally recognized tribal organization. Essentially, it is the difference between self-identifying one’s ethnicity and identifying with a legally determined political tribal entity.

There were eighty individual tribes identified among the sixty-eight survey participants. The affiliations are included in Table 1 and represent individual tribal affiliations. The six most common affiliations were Ojibwe, Chahta (Choctaw), Diné, Menominee, Oddawa, and Hočąk (Winnebago). Tsalagi (Cherokee), Dakota, and Lakota represented 5%, while Oneida, Muskogee (Creek), Keres (Laguna Pueblo), and Tewa (Taos and Santo Domingo Pueblos) represented 2% of the tribal affiliations. Apsáalooke (Crow), San Carlos Apache, Arikara, Hidatsa, Mandan, Métis, Miami, Omaha, Pima, Seneca, Wasco, and Washoe all fell into the 1% range included. Along with participants who marked a single tribe, 15% identified as having two or more tribes.



The majority of combinations of two or more tribes included Hoçąk, Diné, Ojibwe, and Menominee. It should be noted that the tribes and their percentages of the survey participants are representative of data found in a 2004 study (Velosos et al, 2004). Many of the participants (both survey and interview) indicated mixed-race or tribally mixed. This was also consistent with Velosos et al's study (2004). They noted that:

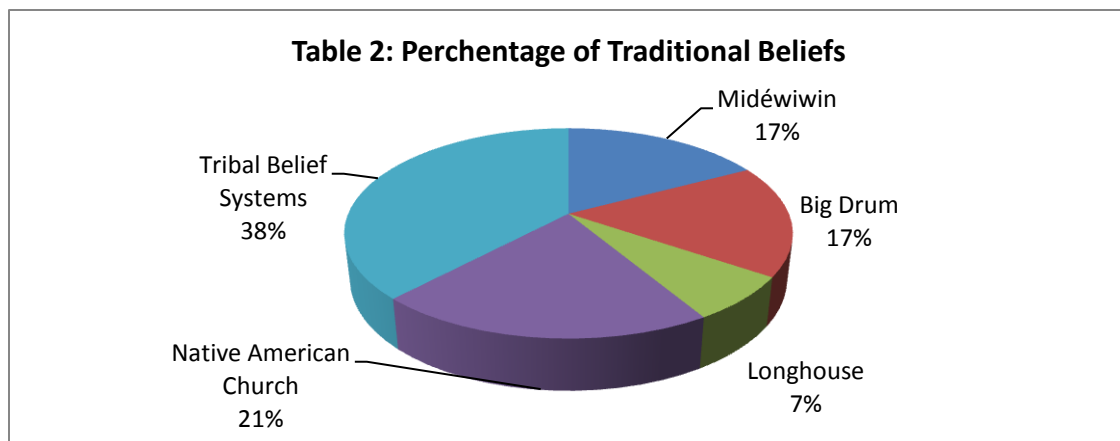
“Of all the Native American individuals who indicated their Tribal affiliation, 80% (13,390 out of 16,718) of the respondents self-identified as members of Native American tribes in combination with one or more races, 20% (3,328 out of 16,718) as members of North American tribes alone, and 2% (2,909 out of 16,718) as members of Latin American tribes alone. It is interesting to note that individuals who self-identified as Native American in combination with other races represented more tribal affiliations than their counterparts who self-identified as Native American alone (Velosos et al, 2004:67).”

Being mixed-race or tribally mixed is common in the Chicago American Indian community. This occurs due to the large number of diverse tribes present in community and the close proximity and interactions with other ethnic groups. The structured survey participants noted two or more tribes but not two or more race categories with the exception of two siblings that marked Muskogee and Creole. The Semi-structured interview participants did note other races/ethnicities. There were three Caucasian and Native, Three Latino and Native, and one African American and Native. It is interesting to note that they did not use the standard race categories, but specified a specific ethnic group. For example, instead of saying White, many noted they were German, Italian, or Polish, and the same for those mixed with Latino. Whether a person described themselves as one tribe or tribally mixed, consideration should be made as to how someone views their ethnic identity and what they emphasize versus what they do not. For example, someone may mark one tribe but in fact be three. They may have simply highlighted the tribe they feel a closer personal or lived connection to. They may also be mixed-race but decided not acknowledge the other non-Native ethnic identity. This may stem from the question asked, which is ‘What is your tribal affiliation(s)? People may think that tribal affiliation refers only to a Native American tribe and that anything non-Native or ethnic does not fall under the heading of “tribe.” This an interesting question and is worthy of further research. Something found within the spiritual beliefs and tribal affiliations of the participants was that they often favored one tribe over the others depending how their upbringing and which tribal identity was emphasized in the household.

*Beliefs:*

The religious affiliations of the participants can be grouped into three major categories; Traditional, Christian, and mixed/dual beliefs were represented in the surveys. There is a very small fourth category of Eastern religions including Buddhism (3%), Baha'i (1%), and Islam (1%). Some participants fell into a non-religious category, which included Agnostic (3%), and Non-religious (9%).

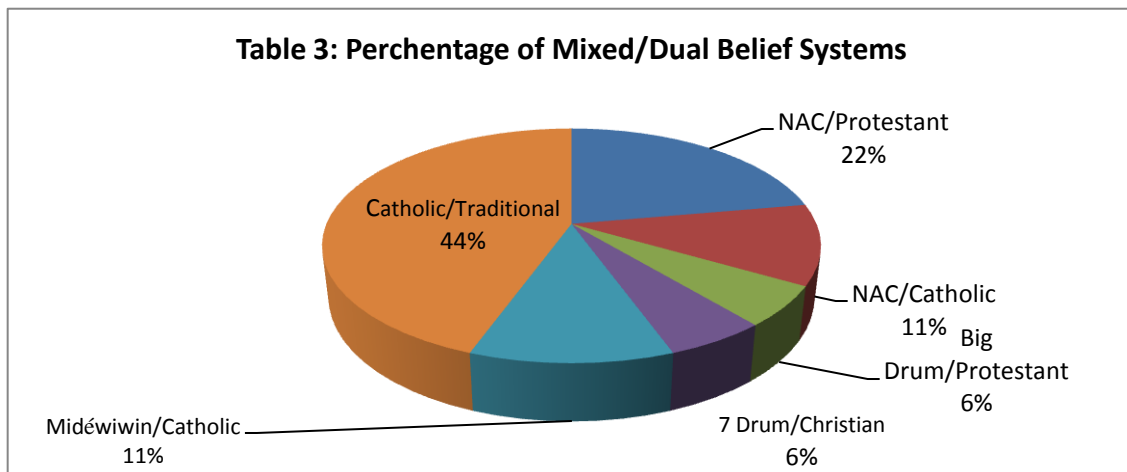
The traditional religions (25 responses) were represented by affiliations such as the Midéwiwin, Big Drum, Longhouse, Native American Church, and tribal belief systems- Diné, Dakota, Lakota, Anishinabek, Hoçak, Pueblo, and Tsalagi.



Mixed/dual beliefs (17 responses) generally combined traditional and Christian beliefs, and included Native American Church/Protestant, Native American Church/Catholic, Big Drum/Protestant, 7 Drum/Christian, Midéwiwin/Catholic, and Roman Catholic/Traditional. A common religious phenomenon within the community (based on interview and survey data) is the various mixed/dual beliefs present within the community. It is interesting to note because it represents a spiritual than religious approach to the sacred and is reflective of living in a multi-tribal community and multi-tribal households. There is a connection to a traditional perspective of the sacred. The

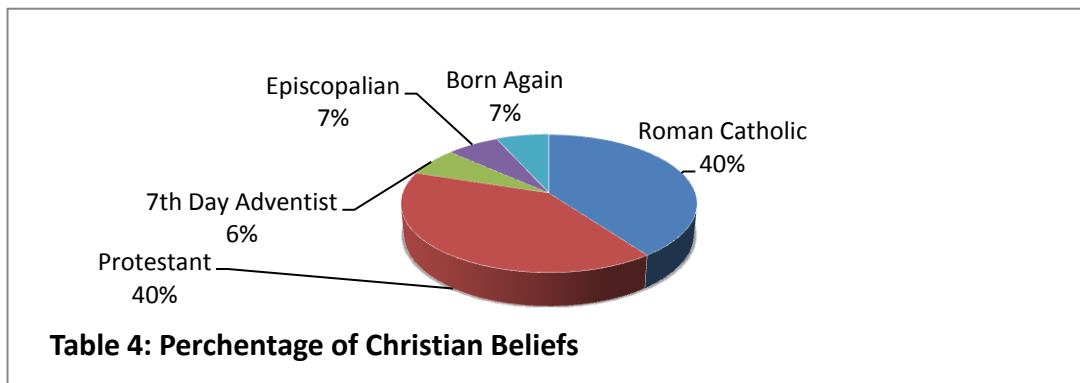


participants and community members maintain a sense of relatedness to spiritual traditions that may be structurally different, but reaching for the same goal of transcending the mundane and touching the infinite. While they may follow multiple traditions, they often do not mix the practices, philosophies, or tribal beliefs of the different traditions. One community member noted that while they followed the Native American Church and Roman Catholicism, but maintained a separation between the two, respecting the uniqueness of each one. Through respecting the uniqueness of each one, they are able to find the common ground between the two traditions. Tribal identity and perspective often influences and/or acts as a fulcrum, allowing individuals to find harmony between two different traditions, while applying it to their daily lives.



The Christian affiliations (16 responses) include 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Episcopalian, and Born Again. Protestantism and Catholicism, while both being Christian, were lumped separately due to their theological and political differences. The consolidation of the different Protestant denominations within the overall analysis due to their philosophical similarities and that they belong to a larger religious and

spiritual tradition within Christianity. One pattern that emerged from the Christian affiliations was that the majority claimed Protestant at 60% versus Roman Catholic at 40%. This is interesting because American Indians tend to have higher numbers in the Catholic affiliation. This may reflect a growing change in preference for Protestant denominations or more outreach by Protestant Churches to American Indians. This is a pattern that deserves further examination. However, Catholicism and Protestantism evened out on the overall analysis. Interestingly, Catholicism's numbers increased when the dual beliefs were included in the overall Catholic response. If anything this would indicate that Catholic Indians are more likely to incorporate or maintain their tribal beliefs versus those who claim Protestant.



The top eight belief systems represented in the two surveys (2007-2008) are Tribal belief systems (15%), Catholic/Tribal beliefs (12%), Roman Catholicism (9%), Protestantism (9%), Non-Religious (9%), Native American Church (both independently and in combination) (8%), Midéwiwin (7%), and Big Drum (7%). The religious and spiritual traditions declared by survey participants are fairly representative of the Chicago American Indian community. The high number of people who claimed traditional

religion/beliefs demonstrates that many urban Indians have retained, maintain, and/or follow the belief systems of their tribe(s). This also corresponds to the responses that placed a high value on maintaining tribal identity. The participants of this research viewed their tribal identity as something very important and something that is always constant, regardless of spiritual or religious tradition/perspective. Spirituality is one of many components of the expression and maintenance of tribal beliefs and values. Christianity by itself came in third in terms of religious traditions with Catholicism being the most common response. Followers of Eastern religions amongst community members are common. The universal and open nature of Buddhism and Baha'i allows people to be a part of a world religion without the need to give up their tribal identities and traditions. Eastern Religions represent one of many spiritual options community members have in Chicago. The Agnostics and participants who claimed only spiritual are also common, as many are content with a belief in a creator or something bigger than humanity, without ascribing or committing to a specific belief system. For others, such as Atheists and non-religious people, the belief in a deity is not required for them to feel connected to the world and are content with a material perspective of the universe. This latter group finds the sacred in the living world around them.

### **Structured Survey Tool Data Analysis:**

The 2008 survey data was entered into a comprehensive matrix, with separate matrices for each age cohort using Microsoft Excel. The latter was done to examine each age cohort independently. The 2007 data was compiled into its own matrix, as some of the questions were different from the 2008 survey. Data from each survey were separated

due to the difference in questions asked, and analyzed in aggregate and by cohort, without any other elaboration, a standard procedure to get a sense of how community members viewed the importance of spiritual and tribal identity as a whole. Both had the same questions for the participant's demographic information (age, gender, tribe, etc...), but the questions regarding their perspectives of spirituality were different. For the 2007 survey, there were thirteen participants, eight Female and five male, and all resided in Chicago. It should be noted here that responses specific to gender were not recorded because the focus of the analysis was on age cohorts and not gender. The survey contained ten questions. The first seven questions focused on demographic information and question eight asked the participants to rate the importance of religion and spirituality in life. Question 8 included scaled questions requiring the participants to circle five choices rating the importance of religion in their life ranging from very important to not at all. Questions nine and ten were short response questions. These latter questions focused on whether not they felt religion/spirituality was an important part of their lives and if it helped them maintain their tribal identity.

The most common responses for this survey was Very important (69%), Somewhat (15%), Average (15%), Not very important (0%), and Not important at all (0%). The two written response questions (questions 9 and 10) provided a good perspective on how the participants felt about the importance of spirituality in their life and its role in maintaining tribal identity. When asked if their religious beliefs were an important part of their identity, the most common response was yes. Following quotes are representative of the participant responses to Question 9:

“Yes, because it outlines your moral beliefs, behavior, and how you make decisions in your life (Female, Oneida/Menominee).”

“It is in our heritage and culture. It’s all around us and it’s in us, and we are thankful for it (Male, Ojibwe).”

Question 10 asked the participants if their spiritual or religious beliefs help them maintain their cultural identity. The following quotes are representative of the responses to

Question 10:

“Yes, because partaking in the religion can help you feel like you are part of something (Female, Oneida/Menominee, age 21).”

“Yes, (it maintains) identity and (is) an expression of self (Male, Wasco/Pima, age 69).”

This survey was an exploratory tool to gauge the general feeling of community members regarding tribal identity and spirituality. The responses from the 2007 survey revealed that spirituality and tribal identity were both seen as important connected to each other. This survey provided a perspective on the level of importance for maintaining spiritual and tribal identity amongst community members. It also provided a base for new inquiries and perspectives regarding the importance of family, peers, and community on maintaining spiritual and tribal identities and was used to create a new survey for 2008.

The 2008 survey explored the importance of maintaining spiritual and tribal identity and the role of family, peers, and community played a significant role in this. This survey also included two questions focused on how people viewed spirituality and cultural maintenance among youth in the community. The questions on the 2008 survey were comprised of eight rating questions with five choices. The questions (10-17) focused on the importance of maintaining spiritual beliefs and tribal identity. The responses were entered into a matrix on MS Excel and coded 1-5 in descending order, with Very important equaling 5, and Not at all equaling 1.

The participants gave the highest rating of Very Important (9%) to Questions 11-13. This indicates that the participants felt that maintaining one's tribal identity was very important, and that the role of family was very important in maintaining both sacred and tribal identities. The importance of spiritual or religious belief in their personal lives was marked, on average, as important. This may signify that while spiritual identity emerged as important and the larger identifier of tribe rated as having greater importance. The data generated a similar pattern when examined through the age cohorts. Across the age range from eighteen to eighty-one, the participants rated the preservation of tribal identity as very important and the role of spirituality in one's life as important. Table 2 shows the distribution of response for Questions 10-17 across all age cohorts.

<b>Table 5: Percentage of Responses to Questions 10-17 of the 2008 Community Survey.</b>								
<u>Questions</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>
Average								
<u>Response</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>
percent	7%	9%	9%	9%	7%	7%	7%	5%

The responses to Questions 10-17 demonstrate that the maintenance tribal identity and the belief systems of the participants are important to aspects of their lives. But does it show a relationship between the two? The relationship between the maintenance of tribal and spiritual identity appears in the responses of Questions 12 and 13. The importance of family in maintaining both tribal and spiritual identity and traditions rated as very important across all age cohorts. The role of family is important to note because it corresponds to the responses the interviews in which interview participants said that much of the religious and spiritual life of the community is family based. It also corresponds to the ritual nodes noted in the previous chapter that operate on a family to

family basis. Questions 14 and 15 focused on the social aspects of maintain tribal and sacred identity. Question 14 asked about the role of peer groups on maintaining tribal identity. Question 15 asked if they felt community played an important role in maintaining tribal identity and traditions (including spiritual traditions). The role of social and peer groups in the maintenance of sacred and tribal identity were rated as important overall.

The last two questions (16 and 17) of the survey asked the participants if they thought youth believed that maintaining a sacred and tribal identity was important. These questions were rated on average as important for maintaining tribal identity and slightly important for maintaining sacred identity. This discrepancy may originate from what perceptions regarding the religiosity of youth versus how youth actually see themselves. This demonstrates that community members acknowledge that youth are maintaining their tribal identities (rated as important overall), but in terms of preserving spiritual or religious identity (rated as slightly important) is not as important. The responses to the last two questions did not correspond with the data from the semi-structured interviews, especially among the 18-30 and 51+ cohorts. The 18-30 and 51+ cohorts noted that spiritual and tribal identities were in a developmental and exploratory stage. Both saw youth as developing and coming into their own individual identities examining the traditions of their family and tribe and the traditions of other peoples and ideas they encounter. From this, they are drawing meaning, specifically what it means from them on an individual, familial, and tribal level and further discussed in Chapter 5, where the age cohorts will be discussed in more detail in the context of the semi-structured interviews.

The structured surveys provided important background information on the importance spirituality and tribal identity within the community. The sixty-seven participants represent community members who actively practice and participate in their tribal belief systems and maintain their identities as Native people. Most significant was the role of family in the maintenance of tribal beliefs and traditions. It is possible that in a large, multi-tribal community like Chicago, families provide the basis and foundation where individuals form and develop their sense of tribal and spiritual identities. This theme of family also correlated to the semi-structured interview narratives in which participants talked about how their families shaped their perspectives of tribal identity and choices regarding spiritual paths. The next section will cover the semi-structured interview survey tool.

### **Semi-Structured Interview Data:**

From 2005 through 2009, semi-structured interviews of key community members took place. The purpose of the interviews was to gain an understanding of how the sacred is lived and expressed among members of the Chicago Indian community and how its relationship to tribal identity. While the survey data illuminated some patterns between sacred and tribal identity, the interviews provided meaning and an understanding to the patterns illuminated in the 2007 and 2008 surveys. The interviews also revealed their own patterns. A pattern emerged in which one could see the developments of sacred and tribal identity across generations.

This pattern appeared when examining the narratives of middle-aged adults and seniors as they discussed how they viewed the sacred and tribal identity in their youth



and young adult lives (in the past), their experiences were being reflected in the interviews of young adults (in the present). When looked at from an intergenerational perspective, the relationship between sacred and tribal identities becomes visible.

As found in the survey data, family is the nexus from which the ideas and concepts of tribal and sacred identity are taught. However, these ideas need meaning and substance. Meaning arises through the experiences, ideas, and choices one encounters through life. For many in the Chicago American Indian community, their tribal and spiritual identities developed over time (and some are still in that process). Ultimately, people come to a point when they find the meaning and substance they were looking for and then begin the next phase, which living and practicing their beliefs and tribal identities.

The interviews fall under two major themes, Personal Development of Sacred Identity; and Sacred Identity on a Community-wide Level. Data for the first theme came from the responses of Question Group 2. The forty-one key informant interview participants were organized into age cohorts, which were utilized to examine the development of spirituality and religiosity through a lifetime. Personal interviews were transcribed and the question group sections from each transcript were tagged as major codes. The purpose for this was to examine each question group and its associated quotes could be isolated and analyzed. After analysis, the quotes were further organized by age into a qualitative narrative of intergenerational experience and development of the sacred aspects of identity.

*Question Groups:*

Originally, there were five question groups (see Appendix II- Semi-Structured Interview). The first three question groups were the primary question groups utilized for this research and generated to get an idea of how the participants viewed the sacred within their own life and experiences and their perspectives of how religiosity and the sacred manifests themselves in the public eye of the community. The next two question groups focused on specific members of the community, namely religious practitioners and specialists and community board members and directors.

Question Group 1 focused on basic demographic information and contained eight questions. Question Group 2 centered on what community members felt were important aspects and events of their personal, family, and/or tribal cosmological, spiritual, and ceremonial beliefs, traditions, and practices. This question group contained five questions and eight probes. Question Group 3 focused on the current state of religiosity and spirituality within Chicago American Indian community. The goal of this question group was to see how the current community defines the religious and spiritual heritage of the Chicago American Indian community as a whole. Question Group 3 contained three questions and five probes.

Question Group 4 focused on religious/spiritual practitioners and specialists. There was a total four participants in the practitioner group. Two represented clergy who work within the community and two are traditional practitioners who visit the community throughout the year. The two clergy were Father Peter J. Powell, director of the St. Augustine's Center for the American Indian and Sister Patricia Mulkey, director of the ANAWIM Center. Father Powell has been active in the community since 1961 and founded the St. Augustine's Center. He has seen the community develop for some four

decades and has a deep insight into the variety of spiritual expression that has and still exists within the community. He has also seen trends and changes in the spiritual practices in the community. Sister Patricia has been the director of ANAWIM since 1998. Like Father Powell, she has seen trends and patterns regarding religiosity and spirituality within the community since she became director of the center. The two traditional practitioners are Skip and Babbette Sandman. They are medicine people in the Anishinabe Midéwiwin Lodge. They currently live in Duluth, Minnesota and visit the community to visit and doctor clients and “patients.” They have been coming to the community for the last twelve years and are considered well-established community members. Chicago is one of the places they visit. Both Babbette and Skip represent a common trend amongst traditional healers, in that they visits clients in various cities and communities and make periodic house calls. They are also licensed substance abuse and domestic violence counselors. They visits can involve counseling and advice, dream interpretations, naming ceremonies, pipe ceremonies, and other ceremony and ritual related to the Midéwiwin.

All four specialists serve the community on different levels. When they practice and hold public ceremonies, they are always open to community members. Regardless of personal beliefs, all community members have the choice to participate or not. What is important, and stressed by the four ritual specialists, is that these ceremonies are to maintain positive ties and relationships within the community. They offer a forum for the community to gather and share in a sacred and/or social event. Ultimately what these four do his help create and maintain community bonds, which is important for keeping the community as a whole, healthy.

Other participants could also fit under this question group. There was one learning to become a Kiva Chief (medicine person, Laguna Pueblo), another was a bundle carrier for the Crow, one carried a bundle for the Arikara tribe, and a few participants carried personal pipe bundles. For the carriers of the tribal bundles, they did not open these up for the Chicago community, as they are for specific purposes and have significance to their home communities. This latter group however did not identify themselves as specialists but as community members who happened to have these bundles and associated practices. They did use them, but only in more personal and small group contexts.

Question Group 4 focused on religious specialists and practitioners and to understand their perspective of spirituality and religiosity within the community. As the research progressed, this question group was not required because the participants who fell under this category also answered Question Groups 2 and 3, and as such, the questions in this group were repetitive. However, despite its eventual incorporation into Question Groups 2 and 3, Question Group 4 was useful in organizing data and information that was specific to religious practitioners and specialist in terms of how they came to their practice and what they saw in the community as terms of religiosity. And it was this last part that contributed greatly to Question Group 3 and an understanding of religiosity on the community wide level. The four identified practitioners are the same as the other community members in terms of their experiences but differ in what they see throughout the community, as their positions give them a deep perspective and insight into current perceptions of the sacred within the community. As such, these four were key

informants regarding the community wide perspective and essence of the sacred identity of the community.

Question Group 5 was comprised of three questions and two probes specifically for community organization board members and directors. Question group 5 was intended to get a perspective of the sacred in the community from the perspective of the heads of community organizations. However, there were only three times when this question group was utilized and was asked when interviewing Joe Podlasek (AIC Executive Director), Father Powell (Director of St. Augustine's), and Sister Patricia Mulkey (Director of ANAWIM at the time of this research). It did not provide any specific information regarding religiosity within the community that was not already covered in Question Group 3. It did however produce information regarding the history and current activities of these three organizations.

The responses from Question Group 3 and the structured survey provided the information for the second theme of the Sacred on a Community-wide Level. Along with semi-structured interview data, the information from the structured survey and field notes was also included. The structured survey was organized, and examined, using MS Excel. This data created background information regarding community views of religion and spirituality to demonstrate how the community ties itself together and maintains a collective identity through religion and spirituality. The data from Question Group 3, the survey, and the field notes laid the foundation for a qualitative narrative of religiosity and experience within the community as a whole.

In all, Question Group 1 (Demographics), Question Group 2 (Personal views of the sacred), and Question Group 3 (the sacred within the community as a whole) were

utilized the most. In addition, their responses provided the major bulk of data for this study. The data from the semi-structured or key informant interviews was examined by utilizing age cohorts to observe how the sacred evolves through one's life time. Along with interviews and survey, there was a fair amount of information gathered from informal conversations and participant observation.

### *The Participants:*

Forty-one key informant interviews took place from August 2006 to January 2009. Over this three-year period, interviews were collected as people became available for the interviews and when the researcher was in Chicago to conduct them. For example, in August 2006, the researcher gathered eighteen interviews because he was only in Chicago for that month. The interviews collected in 2007, occurred in a two-month period from July to August, and produced sixteen interviews and in 2008, the remaining interviews were gathered from August through October. It should also be noted that the researcher was employed by the American Indian Center's Education Department and the University of Illinois at Chicago's Department of Psychiatry for Circles of Care Chicago (operated through the American Indian Center) during the fieldwork and analysis period. This employment coupled with the researcher's travel between Missoula, Montana (University of Montana) and Chicago influenced the interview (and survey) data collection schedule.

Along with the forty-one formal interviews, there were a number of informal interviews and data collected through participant observation. The researcher has been a member of the community for fifteen years and many community members were familiar

with him and felt comfortable talking about their cultural and spiritual beliefs and their lives in Chicago. However, some people did not want to be interviewed or felt their comments and observations might upset other community members. Out of respect, they were not formally interviewed. In many cases during the research, community members would start conversations about spirituality and maintaining cultural traditions and identity during community events or during work meetings. These conversations allowed the researcher to understand how cultural identity is maintained within the community. It also provided space to ask questions about how community and individuals maintained their tribal identity or how people related or connected to Chicago. Community members were aware of the research and through these informal interviews and conversations, contributed in ways that made them feel comfortable.

A “snowball” sampling method was utilized in the selection of participants for this research. This method locates key individuals in the community, who then point out other people who may want to participate or be likely candidates for the research. This method is useful in accessing “hidden populations” like the Indians in Chicago (small, dispersed group in a much larger population). This was especially the case for the participants between the ages of 18-30. The participants consisted of individuals who had lived in the community for two to three generations, were active members during the fieldwork period, have a particular knowledge regarding specific spiritual knowledge and practices, and most importantly they were interested in being interviewed. The ages of the participants ranged from eighteen to eighty-two. The participants had the right to choose which questions they would like to answer or not, and have the right to voluntarily terminate their participation in the research at any time, without question. The

interviews were recorded onto a digital recorder using a clip-on microphone. The participants signed a Participant Consent Form (Appendix I) and acknowledged whether they wanted their names used in the study or to remain anonymous. All of the participants have lived in Chicago or Chicago area for a minimum of two years. The participants had the option to have their names used or not in this research. All forty-one interview participants gave permission to be identified by name.

The tribal backgrounds of the participants varied, representing multiple tribes and ethnicities. The six most common tribal affiliations included Anishinabe, Hočąk, Chahta (Choctaw), Oneida (Wisconsin), Menominee, Dakota, and Lakota. The tribal combinations include Menominee-Oneida, Anishinabe-European, Lakota-European, Lakota-Latino, Diné-Anishinabe, and Menominee-Latino. In many ways, the diversity of the participants reflects a larger trend in the Chicago American Indian community. Many community members are of mixed tribal and/or ethnic background. In the case of people who are two or more tribes often, identify more with one of their tribes. How people learned about their tribal identity and religious traditions at a young age and whether their parents or family identified with one tribe more than the rest, often influences these choices. This is not to say that they denied or did not recognize their other tribes or ethnic groups, but felt a stronger connection to one in particular. This connection for many was not necessarily instantaneous but was something that combined up brining and self-exploration. What is interesting (or maybe it should be expected) is that this exploration for many of the participants began as teenagers and continued into their early twenties. And for the senior participants, it is in their advance age and experiences that provide them with a deeper understanding of tribal and sacred identities. Ultimately, though, as



the participants explored the meaning of their tribal and ethnic identities, they maintained a sense of tribal identity and connections to the sacred traditions (in practice and/or philosophy). In a sense, the grounding or lack of grounding in tribal identity and its sacred aspects provided the impetus to examine what it meant to be a tribal person and the meaning of the associated ideas of the sacred in the larger context of the larger society.

### *Semi-structured Interview Data Analysis*

The Question groups provided a framework to analyze the responses in terms of personal and community perspective. Question Group 1 focused on basic demographic information that was discussed earlier, while Question Group 2's focus on personal views of the sacred will be discussed in Chapter 5. The responses from Question 2 revealed a perspective of the sacred across multiple generations. Through this perspective, it became possible to see how sacred identity develops over time. Question Group 3 provided some insight into how the interview participants saw expressions of sacred identity throughout the community. This question group corresponded to the structured survey data and provided some qualitative perspectives within the overall community.

The responses to the first question of this group, "What is religion, spirituality, or ceremony like in the Chicago American Indian Community," focused on what they see and/or have experienced. The responses for this question had a common theme that community members are spiritual, but that spirituality and tribal traditions are kept private or within family circles. The following quote is representative of the responses to this question.

*“INT: Would you say that many in the community are open about their beliefs?”*

NWW: Ah, no, I would say...no, I don't think people are very open about their ceremonial beliefs, because they keep that to themselves, because that is something for them. And I don't think people share that enough with the younger ones and maybe that is something we should do... people keep those sacred things to themselves because it is sacred (Negwes White, Anishinabe/Diné/O'Odham, 2006).”

The secretive nature of spirituality amongst community members is not as negative as it sounds. This sentiment reflects the special connection spirituality has to family and tribal traditions. One participant gave the following response when asked about the Menominee Big Drum religion in Chicago.

“...It's just one of those things where I feel like it is very personal and I feel like the whole Big Drum wave, which is something that my Mom and I talk about in our household, we can share about it in the community, but...unless they are involved, it's like that is special to our family, I can't put that in a community perspective, I'm just having trouble putting it there (Jayne Blacker, Menominee/Pottawatomie, 2006).”

Spiritual traditions, especially those connected to tribal identity, are not something shared with others without a deeper understanding of the beliefs in a tribal cultural context. There is care to respect other beliefs within the community and the inter-tribal sense regarding spiritual practices and beliefs allows people to keep their traditions, but also allows them to share with those who are interested.

There are other cases where the ceremony is public, which then opens up the idea of family or connectedness on a community wide scale. Funerals are a good example of this. One often learns about the sacred traditions of community members at their funerals. And as the death rites of a particular tradition commence, community members, regardless of tribe or ethnicity, all take part in the ceremony. For that moment, everyone is in a particular sacred space, whether it is Native American Church, Midéwiwin, Big

Drum, Roman Catholic, or a simple memorial ceremony. The following quote captures this idea.

“I think religion here is a mixture of everything, especially here in Chicago, because you have so many different tribes from all over and they are all bringing with them little bits and pieces...to add together. And that mixed with the diversity of Chicago for what it is, it makes a big fusion, it makes a different religion, but with aspects of everything. I wouldn't say it (spirituality and religion) is extremely important, but I think whenever there is a difficult situation, or if there ever was a difficult situation, the religion would be referenced to determine how they (the community) would go about solving the issue (Jasmine Alfonso, Oneida/Menominee, 2006).”

The second question, “How does living in Chicago affect on your religious beliefs and practices,” focused on whether or not living in an urban environment had negative, positive, or neutral affects on the belief systems of the participants and community members. The responses to this question were interesting because while it asked about their personal experience, the participants often placed their experience in the context of the larger community. The following quotes are a good example of this.

“I can't think of anything... that takes away, only contributions. I think it's a very nurturing community for spirituality, even if it's not... being from a different Tribe, if they want to have some sort of ceremony, the Indian community can help them find a way to get it done, it's nurturing in that manner... Meaning if the Native American Church wants to do something, they can find a place to do it in the Chicago community. If there is a funeral, if people want to practice their spirituality, the Chicago Indian community is there to help them, nurturing, to help them get that done (Jayne Blacker, Menominee/Pottawatomie, 2006).”

“I don't really think anything takes away from it. I think they at least try to preserve something of it, but no I don't think they take anything away (Erin Tubby-Hutoon, Mississippi Chahta, 2006).”

Many of the participants stated that living in Chicago presents community members with more choices in terms of spirituality. There were mentions of difficulties such as getting materials and supplies for ceremonies, having the proper people to officiate, or transportation to get to ceremonies. Many also noted that within the community there are people who practice similar beliefs and can help or support people's ceremonial and spiritual needs.

In some ways, the inter-tribal make-up of the community provides opportunities to learn about other tribes or individuals can find different spiritual communities such as the Native American Church, the Midéwiwin, Big Drum, or various Christian communities. Spiritual communities are important linkages for newcomers to the community and for long time residents. Many of the traditional beliefs are tribally based and link people from the same tribe. However, some, such as the Native American Church and Women's Solstice Group involve members of multiple tribes and provide the opportunity for one to interact and network amongst members of the same tribe and others. Spirituality within the community is relatively unseen, but it has a social aspect that links community members within Chicago and beyond.

When it comes to the maintenance of spiritual practice and tribal identity on a larger scale, individual choice plays an important role. Practicing and maintaining sacred traditions are not something written in DNA; people choose to or not to perform them. People have to want to maintain their traditions and key to this is whether the traditions are relevant to where they are at in their lives. Kermit and Debbie Valentino (Oneida) noted that their participation in the Long House tradition came based on their familiarity with other traditions and their general life experiences. The Long House had always been

there, but it took some growing on their part to know when they were ready for it. In all of the above cases, and similar throughout the community, there is a return to learning tribal languages. Something that was noticeable within the interviews and general conversations with community members was that as people began to take interest in their tribal traditions and culture, they always stressed the importance of learning their tribal language, as sacred knowledge is woven into language and language concepts.

Therefore, while there were responses that indicated the disappearance of sacred traditions and key components of tribal identity, there were also responses that indicated that people were interested in learning these traditions. In an urban context, being away from one's home community in traditional lands may inspire Urban Natives to maintain or learn their tribes' traditions. However, people learn at different paces and when the timing is right and they are ready for it, people will learn it and thus help maintain it in the proper way.

Another theme that emerged in terms of living in Chicago was culture shock. This was something that many noted as having an effect on how people maintained their identity and what they presented in the public eye and what they did not. In some cases, the experience of racism or intertribal (and personal community) politics can make maintaining spiritual identity a challenge. One participant noted that:

“There are families that lived in Chicago and grown up in Chicago and they are still here—Indian families are still here. They have their own type of traditions. They have to mix them with what they know of from back home and what they have right there in front of them. They are two different worlds. That's why a lot of our children are having a hard time in the schools and growing up because they have two different worlds. For a young teenager to grow up today to try to be anywhere near what the traditional parents want them to be, unless they are living on a reservation and they do cultural things every week or every other day and

they're involved in doing languages, they are going to lose it. They have to live in this world first...the white man's world. (And then) From there, they have to live in an Indian world. There's no—between the two—you have to mix this world between the two with yourself so you can be more in touch with yourself. You've got to try to center your own life to survive in combination (Kermit Valentino, Oneida, 2007).

“I'd have to say, yeah, there definitely is...Living here in the city is a constant outside force. It is a constant outside force because the city we live in is fundamentally founded on one set of cultural ideals..., which are white, European values... (Allen Turner, Oglala Lakota, 2007).”

This was a common experience among many participants age forty and up. This idea of simultaneously living in a Native and non-Native world provided a framework for interacting with non-Natives and prioritizing and maintaining their Native identity.

There can be some difficulties that arise from the non-Native world, especially in terms of worldview and cultural perspectives, but there are instances where conflict can arise from the within the community. Georgina Roy (Ojibwe) describes stresses both outside of and within the community.

“I think the environment is—what I grew up in was a lot of trees, flowers, things that influenced the growth of my spirituality. I seen birds, butterflies, I have seen birth of birds, I have seen birth of little animals, and I have seen birth of a baby deer. In the city, you cannot see those things. You have to look hard for things in the city. What has God put in your path to see? For me today, I see many homeless and a lot of pain on the streets. So it's a different picture being stolen to me here in the city compared to what I saw and it helped my spirit world. We did not have multiple nations of people when I was growing up. There was only Native people (Ojibwe) and the white people. There was a clash there; a lot of prejudice was there. Here, in the city, for me...I was invisible. I was who I was but no one had to know I was native or know that my family was native. I could go anywhere in the community. You're invisible here...When I started coming to the Native community, like I said, there was the Canadian and American Ojibwe Boys. There was a conflict at one time. So I walked very slowly in the community as I was coming in. Because the prior Canadians that were here before

me, the stories I heard—I did have some—a few people did tell me to go back to Canada where you belong (Georgina Roy, Ojibwe, 2007).”

The participants mentioned this type of experience a few times; one community member noted that when she left the community in the 1980s and returned to her reservation, she was met with some resistance. The same experience happened when she returned to the Chicago community of having to prove one’s self and their identity. This appeared to be a common trend in both experiences, but people get through this, though not necessarily enjoying it. What is noticeable is that people, who get through the “new kid on the block” period, tend to become accepted and integrated community members. The community at times can be clannish and is probably why many participants noted the private nature of spiritual and tribal identity. This type of conflict between different tribes, and sometimes even within a particular tribe, arises at times. The causes for the conflict are often unknown to those outside of it and they can endure for many years or disappear as quickly as they came. Regardless of cause, stresses from outside and within the community can affect spiritual identity to a point, namely in the sense of connection to the Chicago and reservation communities.

Another type of conflict that arises stems from differing tribal perspectives on the correct way to conduct a ceremony. For example, in the 1990’s, during the NAES College Powwow, a dancer dropped an eagle feather during an inter-tribal dance. The dancing was stopped and the head veteran walked up to the feather to determine how to pick it up. This ceremony can vary from tribe to tribe. Some tribes attach more ceremony to the picking up of the eagle feather where as others may make the feather pick-up less ceremonial or public in order not to cause embarrassment to the person who dropped the

feather. The head veteran was Ojibwe and chose to pick up the feather following the custom of the Big Drum religion. He chose four combat veterans and the drum to sing the song. Before the ceremony started, a Lakota woman voiced concern that the ceremony was not being done properly (from a Lakota perspective). There were also members of the Hočąk tribe who felt ceremony was not being properly. A Diné man mentioned to others around him that it was not right to shame the young man in public with the ceremony. What started out as a ceremony to pick up a fallen feather had turned into multiple tribal perspectives chiming in on how a particular ceremony should be conducted. The ceremony itself shows respect to fallen combat veterans (the fallen feather) and reinforces the proper care and respect given to eagle feathers. This is something many tribes agree on, the difference comes in how to conduct the ceremony. What eventually happened was that the perspective of the head veteran took precedence, as he is the one who oversees protocols during a powwow. This was something that all parties involved agreed on and the ceremony proceeded. The head veteran conducted the ceremony in the way that he originally wanted to do it, the feather was retrieved, and the powwow continued. This is one example of how differing tribal perspectives of ceremony, ritual, and protocol can create conflict. Ultimately, community members find ways to quell these disagreements by returning to a common value of respect for the ways of other tribes and many times use the opportunities to educate youth and others on how their particular tribe conducts the ceremony.

People find ways to mitigate conflicts and endure. As Kermit and other participants noted that as long as you have a sacred space or place where you can go, things can work out and external and internal pressures and dynamics placed into



perspective. One participant noted that he frequently went to local forest preserves for prayer or as a space to reflect and think clearly. Often traditional ceremonies like sweats or morning prayers at the Lake Front or Sunday mass for others, becomes the coping and adaptive mechanism to deal with external pressures.

Participants were asked if they felt ceremony and spirituality within the community was always changing or if it has stayed the same. The response to this question was that it is both dynamic and permanent. Overall, many of the participants noted that the sacred in the Chicago community was something that was active and often moved in waves. The following response summarizes the perspectives of many participants.

“So I think that the dynamics are constantly changing. Because it is about the shifting of what is important, because it is about the vitality of the community. And by that with the pressure of the society around the community, I think the views of how to preserve spirituality shift with the shifting society around it (Adam Kessel, Oglala Lakota/Italian, 2006).”

At the time of this research, the community was experiencing a surge in religious and spiritual activity and public ceremonies. This came after a few years of relatively low activity in terms of public expressions of spirituality. Beginning around 1999/2000, more ceremonies that are public began to occur on a regular basis, along with a greater interest in learning traditional practices, languages, and worldviews. The surge in interest of traditional spirituality correlated with an overall interest in learning and passing on tribal traditions and maintaining one's status as American Indian.

By 2005, there were a number of traditional practitioners and healers coming to Chicago to either perform ceremonies or visit with community members for consultations or traditional treatments. Ceremonies included sweats, naming ceremonies, healing

ceremonies, pipe ceremonies, and house blessings. In other cases, they would present traditional teachings of sacred narratives, traditional worldview, ceremonial practices, talking circles, or other knowledge that was sought-out. What was interesting was that while traditions were being taught, the nature of the tradition remained the same, while the practice or tangible aspects were adapted to living in Chicago (when required). The participants noted that in essence, the sacred aspects of tribal traditions and ceremonial practices stayed relatively the same. But there was a dynamic aspect in terms of how community members perceive them and fit them into their daily lives. The concepts and foundation of sacred knowledge tend to maintain their integrity in the Chicago American Indian community, as their tangible aspects often combine to meet the current needs of individuals and the community as a whole.

The third question focused the role of community organizations in maintaining the religious and cultural traditions of the community. The three community organizations frequently mentioned in the context of the research topic were; ANAWIM Center, St. Augustine's Center, and the American Indian Center. Many of the participants noted all three of these organizations have a role in preserving the sacred traditions of community members. The following quote provides an example of the role of community organizations in regards to maintaining sacred traditions and identity.

"The (community) organizations and the Center helped me tremendously. Like , just giving...me...a place to kind of, not network- network is a really bad term- so for me I would...when I first came here, I would ask all the elders if they knew my grandmother and grandfather, it has been a long time since they have been here, and they have been gone for...I mean they passed when I was probably eight or nine, so it has been a fairly long time; and when I finally found someone who knew my grandfather that was a huge deal because when I told my father that, he had no idea that anyone would even remember his grandfather. So it is kind of like letting people know that even though you passed on in the community, people still remember you in the community and it gives the

community, like a home. It makes you feel more at home when people know who you are and whose family you are from. And even though you have been out of the community for years, a long time...so the Center is kind of like the mobilizing spot for the community. And people that were part of the community and left for whatever reason and then come back- it is a welcoming feeling, especially when you meet people who know your grandparents, whom you thought nobody would remember, so that was a big deal (Adam Kessel, Oglala Lakota, 2006).”

The American Indian Center was often the point of entry into the community for many of the participants and/or their families. Adam’s experience was similar to many in the community. Mary Ann Armstrong noted that when she and her family came to Chicago, the AIC they did not know many Native People at first. As they participated in the tribal clubs and programs at the AIC, her family made important connections within the Chicago community. The city became less cold and more inviting. The AIC on the other may not be a spiritual center, but it provides the space for community to express their sacred beliefs, whether for pipe ceremonies, masses, funerals, or other sacred events. It also maintains the AIC Medicinal Prairie Garden which provides community members with plants for medicines and ceremonies. The garden grew out of the ceremonial needs of two community members who needed specific plant medicines that were not available in Chicago. In 2003, AIC Wellness Department Director, Sally Wagoner and community member, Julia Brownwolf (Oglala Lakota) decide to create a medicinal garden in front of the Center to grow, and maintain, medicinal and ceremonial plants for community members to utilize.

For others, St. Augustine’s Center and ANAWIM allows Christian community members to attend services with other Native people. Both organizations also bring in traditional healers to the community to perform ceremonies. The openness of both

organizations towards those who follow Christian and/or Traditional ways is something that developed within the Chicago community. While they are Christian, they tend to act more as spiritual centers that attend to the sacred needs of community members. The following quote, made in reference to ANAWIM, captures this idea.

“I think the constant culture at ANAWIM is that people want to know Native spirituality. We have it in a little box and they want to come and get it. There’s this constant craving for Native spirituality for a lot of people here (Georgina Roy, Ojibwe, 2007).”

This quote captured the essence of why community members attend services at ANAWIM and in a similar sense, St. Augustine’s, because they are place where community members can attend services in a place that is culturally sensitive and significant. Community members can connect with these organizations. In all, these three community organizations have attended to the spiritual needs of the community at various times and in different ways. Moreover, it will continue to do so in the future, whether the spiritual wave is high or low.

### **Summary:**

The survey and interview data provided the basis for this research and illuminated some interesting patterns. The surveys gave an idea about how the participants felt about the maintenance of tribal and spiritual identity. Participants of the surveys indicated that maintaining tribal and spiritual identities were important to them on an individual level. From their responses, the role of family emerged as an important catalyst in maintaining both identities. The high rating given to the influence of family in maintaining tribal identity, traditions, and spiritual identity confirmed the responses of from the semi-

structured interviews that spirituality and tribal traditions often kept within families. It also indicates that the family and its traditions provide a foundation from which people can define themselves within a familial unit, with a history and tradition with a larger tribal and community entity. This also had a correlation with some of the interview data.

The semi-structured interviews produced a window into how both sacred and tribal identities are lived by the interview participants. The emergent theme of intergenerational development of sacred identity became a guiding principal within this research and opened a new perspective on how sacred identity is experienced within the community. By seeing the variations in perspectives and experiences across generations, sacred and tribal identities were not a static given that the participants entered the world knowing and practicing. Instead, these identities evolved over time, emerging as the participants matured.

The interview and survey data, coupled with participant observations and informal conversations created a larger picture of sacred and tribal identity within the community at large. The following chapters will discuss this data in further detail, utilizing the methods discussed in this chapter. Chapter 4 will focus on expressions of sacred identity and its relation to tribal identity, while Chapter 5 will examine the sacred on the individual and intergenerational levels.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **THE SACREDNESS OF COMMUNITY: SACRALIZED IDENTITY AND THE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE**

*“This community in Chicago here is home. I have talked to people who left the community and live in Boston, Albuquerque, and other places, and they said it is nothing like Chicago. Chicago is home because everybody is here, they come and go, but it is still a home for everyone.”*  
(Mavis Neconish, Menominee/Pottawatomie, 2006)

A deep and active sense of the sacred characterizes the Chicago Indian community within its religious and ceremonial practices. Crucial to this is the role community organizations and social networks play in providing important social experiences that both binds the community together and helps define it. These organizations and more importantly the social/family networks that maintain ritual and ceremonial ties in a community spread throughout the city (and others parts of the state). On the family and individual levels, community members maintain varying degrees of spirituality, whether it is on a philosophical, religious, or cultural level. Religion and spirituality, while often private, occur in larger community contexts. These public events often become the intersection points where private unseen beliefs, perspectives, and practices open up to other community members. In the public space of community events and ceremonies such as funerals, sunrise ceremonies, Christian mass, pipe ceremonies, and various feasts, different tribal traditions can converge, social and cultural transactions reinforce old customs, and simultaneously allow for localized adaptations.

This chapter discusses and analyzes events and phenomena that occurred over a three-year period. Covered in this chapter are some examples of practice and place. Both provide a window into the diversity of sacred experiences within the community. Practice focuses on the community wide expressions of the sacred. It also covers how community members practice their beliefs. Place focuses on the sacred landscapes and places in the Chicago area. These include natural and man-made spaces.

### **The Dynamics of Traditionalism, Christianity, and Syncretism:**

In the Chicago American Indian community, both traditional and Christian beliefs and practices can stand on their own as separate entities or there are times when the two will overlap. Perspectives of the sacred are dynamic and cover a wide range from very conservative (super religious) to a more philosophical and even irreligious worldview. Expressions of religion and spirituality, both private and public, and built, function, and driven on a sense of or connection to community. This community can be members of the same tribe or clan, or followers of the same religion or spiritual path, and it is often a combination of similar beliefs and family/personal associations that build the various ritual and spiritual nodes within the community. In other cases, community organizations, whether secular or religious, bring people together and from there ritual/spiritual networks are developed. The American Indian Center, as a secular institution, provides space for community members to practice their beliefs. ANAWIM (Kateri Center of Chicago) and St. Augustine's Center for the American Indian provide a place for Christian community members to gather and for those who practice syncretic beliefs. The following examples represent the different manifestations that community can take in the

context of Christian and Traditional communities within the larger Chicago American Indian community.

For Christian members of the community, a sense of being part of a family of faith in Christ connects many, regardless of their denomination. The Christian community is comprised of different tribes and is predominantly Roman Catholic and Episcopalian, with other denominations including Lutheran, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Methodist, and Seventh Day Adventist. The nexus for Christian community members are the ANAWIM Center (Catholic) and St. Augustine's Center (Episcopalian). Some community members will visit both centers for mass and it is common to find non-Christians attending services. These centers, like the community members who utilize them, provide a place to worship and come together as Native people and provide a sense of family.

Community members who practice traditional beliefs represent a large and diverse set of spiritual expressions and practices. Many follow the spirituality of their own tribe(s), some of which are larger institutions within a tribe. Many traditionalists practice their beliefs within family contexts or with other tribal members in home contexts or on reservation. Others may utilize green spaces or the lakefront within the city. The utilization of these green spaces are due to either significance the place holds to particular individuals or they are landscape features that hold significance to tribal beliefs or history. In some cases, rituals/ceremonies occur in conjunction with atmospheric events such as thunderstorms or seasonal transitions like the solstices and equinoxes. There are also times when community centers like the American Indian Center or ANAWIM provide space for ceremonies to happen.



For example, the Midéwiwin is a primary religion of the Anishinabe and other Algonquian speaking tribes of the Great Lakes region. There is one exception, which are the Hočąk, who acquired the religion from the Anishinabe. Both tribes have their own unique versions of this institution, but its origin is connected to migration narrative of the Anishinabe. The Midéwiwin or Medicine Lodge provides a framework for viewing the order of the universe, proper living, and maintaining the core values of the tribe. The focus of the Midéwiwin is healing and maintaining harmony in the universe. Another spiritual complex is the Big Drum.

The Menominee are the predominant followers of the Big Drum religion, however there are also Ojibwe, Hočąk, Pottawatomie, and Dakota who also follow this belief system. The Big Drum originated among the Dakota of Minnesota through the dream of a woman who survived an attack by U.S. soldiers and guided to safety by the sound of a drum. The following among the Dakota was small, but it became popular among the Ojibwe of Minnesota, who then passed it onto Ojibwe and Pottawatomie in Wisconsin, and eventually to the Menominee. The Big Drum stresses living a healthy and proper life. The Big Drum is central to this belief and is the conduit to ancestors and the divine. Other traditional belief systems include the Native American Church (Peyoteism) and tribal based beliefs (religious and spiritual beliefs that are woven into the foundation of the tribe and that do not have a specific name).

Along with Traditionalism and Christianity, many community members follow a more syncretic philosophy to the sacred. Syncretism primarily exists on the individual level, though there can be institutional expressions that exist such as ANAWIM and St. Augustine's Centers. There are various reasons why people mix traditions. Some felt that

every sacred tradition looks to the same god and maintains similar core values of respect, compassion, and virtue. For others, it is simple; Creator is Creator and all religions are the same. While others simply see that people share a belief in the sacred, whether it is deity or philosophically based, that it reminds people of their connection to others and the world around them. In the Chicago American Indian community, syncretism also originates from a respect of sacred traditions and beliefs of other tribes. Regardless of ceremony or tribal tradition, there those who feel that these traditions and practice connect all Native people together. Some community members also noted that by participating in the ceremonies of other tribes, they are reminded of the importance of their own tribal traditions. Another influence for choosing a syncretic perspective is being two or more tribes. This influences their decision to maintain the traditions of all of their tribes.

Pinpointing syncretism within this research was complicated because it did not manifest as a distinct or “pure” belief system. Instead, syncretism manifested itself within Traditional and Christian belief systems at varying degrees. Again, the degree of how much individual community members may combine elements of different traditions varies on their personal perspective of the sacred and which traditions they grew up with or taught to them. Life experiences influence whether or not community members incorporate other beliefs into their spiritual repertoire or if they participate in the spirit of supporting fellow community members. For example, an Ojibwe pipe carrier may conduct the pipe ceremony in the Páŋ’ka (Ponca) or Hočąk traditions, because members of those tribes may utilize that particular pipe carrier in lieu of one from their respective tribe.

Syncretism is common across the country in Native communities and is the result of contact between tribes and non-Indian ethnic groups. While the degree of syncretism can vary, syncretism originates through social interactions with other tribes and ethnic groups. This is especially true in an urban community where proximity to other tribal and ethnic groups is greater. It is inevitable for the sharing of religious and spiritual traditions in an urban Indian community. Religious syncretism is, to some degree, a result of living in a multi-tribal community, especially when portions of community members are two or more tribes. It also occurs because of multiple tribes living within the same community. There is a sense of respect and common identity amongst Native Peoples, especially in terms of spirituality. To use the pipe ceremony again, many tribes have this tradition and respect its importance, regardless of which tribe performs the ceremony. There are members of tribes who do not have the practice of pipe ceremonies or Christianity, and may participate when the ceremony takes place as a gesture or sign of mutual respect. Syncretism in many ways can be associated with a larger Native identity that transcends tribal and family traditions. The sharing and learning of other tribal traditions creates a social bond of understanding and respect for the ways of other community members and also inspire one to learn and/or maintain their tribe's or family's traditions and practices. The syncretism observed during this research revealed a perception of tradition through time and generations. Whether someone felt they were traditional or not, religious or irreligious, participation in the ceremonies of their respective tribe and others links people to understanding their own tribe's past traditions, present manifestations, and the core values that have remained constant through time. Essentially, by participating in the ceremonies of other tribes, some community members noted that they saw the uniqueness

of their own tribal identity and simultaneously similarities with other tribes. Syncretism (for those who practice it) in a sense maintains both a tribal and community-wide identity.

The following sections will discuss three common aspects of religious and spiritual practice within the community. The first will examine the Christian experience, the second will focus on traditional expressions and practices, and the third will focus on funerals and wakes. The latter is important because funerals are public events that gather community members of different tribes and religious traditions together in one ceremony. Wakes and funerals play an important role in maintaining traditions and allowing the community members outside of the tradition to participate and ultimately reinforce a sense of community. These sections will also demonstrate the varying degrees of syncretism within the spiritual practices of the community.

#### *To Hear the Word:*

Christian expressions of the sacred appear in a variety of public guises. Indianized Christianity tends to be the most public as it involves monthly, weekly, or daily masses/services. Christianity has existed among some tribes of the Midwest, such as the Ojibwe, since the mid seventeenth century. Within that time, Roman Catholicism has gone through various stages of enculturation by local tribes. There is a wide range of opinions and religious expression amongst Native Christians in the Chicago community. For some, they are 100% Christian, often Protestant or Born Again Christians who feel that all old Native traditions are either bad or no longer relevant. At the other end, there are those who have incorporated both Christian and Traditional beliefs into a

synchronized religious system. In the middle are those who have either found the right proportion of Christian and Traditional beliefs and those who are still searching. There are multiple factors at play within these three experiences. For many, their choice for following a Christian denomination stems from a family tradition or personal preference. Many of the participants noted that there had been a Christian tradition within their tribal culture, especially those from Southeastern and Southwestern tribes that either have incorporated Christianity into their traditional beliefs or have accepted it as a religious option.

When asked why participants followed Christianity, many like Marcus Zimmerman (Menominee), Georgina Roy (Ojibwe), and Andrea Fish Bradwell (Ojibwe), and others noted that Christianity is what their families practiced and is an integral part of their family's traditions and identity. They like many other Christian Indians, come from tribes where Christianity has become one of many religious options available. While the Christian tradition may be part of tribal or family tradition/history, the practicing of Christian beliefs began at different times of the participant's lives. Some followed it from youth, while others found it later in life.

Georgina Roy recalled having a less than positive view of the local Anglican Church on Manitoulin Island (Canada) because of the negative way in which the reverend treated her father. These early experiences with clergy of Manitoulin were negative, however her faith in the message of Christ took precedent over the authority of Church clergy. She noted that, she did equate the actions of the reverend with the core values of Christ's teachings. Georgina also noted that the masses were in Ojibwe and that she maintained her language through the church services and in her home. Her family was

active in the local church, and this tradition has carried on into Georgina's current role as assistant director of ANAWIM. In April of 2011, Georgina became the first Native American director of the Chicago Kateri Center (ANAWIM).

For Marcus Zimmerman, being Catholic was simply a part of his family's way of life. Marcus' family included traditional Menominee practitioners (medicine people) alongside devote Roman Catholics. So growing up he was able to experience both. He learned about traditional Menominee beliefs from his uncle and Catholicism from his mother. As a teenager, he decided to follow Catholicism on the advice of his mother. Until the day he died at age 56, he attended Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Roman Catholic Church with his siblings. The reason in his own words was that Mt. Carmel is where his family has always gone to church; it was tradition.

Andrea Fish Bradwell (Ojibwe) grew up in a family that was not religious, but spiritual. At age thirteen, Andrea and her sister and brother wanted to attend church because it was something their friends did, so her mother took her and her siblings to an Episcopalian mission Church for Native Americans in Minneapolis. Andrea liked the church, chose to become Christian, and baptized as an Episcopalian. By her early twenties, Andrea began to move away from being a religious Episcopalian to a more spiritual one. As she jokingly noted, that she at least made it to Christmas mass. Then (2007) at age twenty-eight, she decided to convert to Roman Catholicism because her future husband) was Catholic. Both determined that they wanted to be the same religion. Andrea described herself as a more spiritual person, preferring a personal relationship with God than being religious and attending masses all of the time. She attributed this to

her family who did not feel the need to attend church regularly and preferred a more spiritual existence.

Tribal identity is something that many Christian community members have from a young age kept constant. In many ways, organizations like ANAWIM and St. Augustine's help Christian community maintain their tribal identities as a twenty-one year old participant noted.

*"INT: Do you think that is important for maintaining one's tribal identity?"*

AR: Highly, because I am sure I would have picked it (tribal identity) up around powwows or the community, but just growing up around ANAWIM has really enforced it (Anthony Roy, Ojibwe, 2006)."

There is no real push to convert community members. Many of the participants in these two organizations are there by choice. More importantly, they represent the product of a process of adaptation, innovation, and maintaining core cultural values.

The incorporation of Native elements into the Christian mass reflects a few things. The first is the idea of acculturation in the context of Catholic doctrine. Pope Gregory I utilized acculturation, in the sixth century when he directed missionaries to convert the English, to destroy idols, but not temples as the latter could be used as bases for "the worship of the True God," suggested that various rites should be continued whenever they were adaptable to Christian doctrines (Lange, 1957:1070). The result of this program was that missionaries were encouraged to incorporate local "heathen" elements into Christian rites, Christianizing the indigenous beliefs and ceremonies as a way to localize and legitimize Christianity and to erode power/authority from pre-Christian institutions and leadership.

Acculturation policy gave clergy the power to choose what aspects of the indigenous group's culture were legitimate and which were not. This official program is true to some extent in regards to ANAWIM (Kateri Center of Chicago), as the organization is part of the Office of Evangelization and Ethnic Ministries of the Chicago Archdioceses. However, this is not necessarily true from a community perspective. While the incorporation of Native symbolism seems like a form of acculturation policy from the official Diocese perspective, community members view it differently. The direction of organizations such as ANAWIM and St. Augustine's are driven more by community members than official directives from a Diocese. For many it is a way of making ANAWIM and St. Augustine's uniquely Native spaces. Sister Patricia and Georgina Roy noted that ANAWIM exists as place for Native Peoples to gather, socialize, and pray as a community. Equally, St. Augustine's focus was not as a mission, but rather as a place for Chicago's Native People to call their own.

Community members who consider themselves Christian tend to blur the line between Traditional and Christian belief systems, or between the various Christian denominations. Community members saw no real difference being Christian and being Indian and did not stress any denominational differences. Whether you are Catholic or Protestant, Jesus' message is the same. In many ways, it is at this intersection of Christian and Native identity that syncretism often appeared and created a unique expression of Christianity and maintained social bonds within the community. The Communion service (mass without a priest) at the ANAWIM Center exemplifies this point. The following communion took place in June of 2008.



The Communion, like other services at ANAWIM, began with a Seven Direction prayer. The prayer began with everyone facing east, then south, west, north, up toward the sky, and down towards the earth, as cedar and sage burned from the *miigis* shell. The *miigis* is a shell that represents the sacred shell/prophet that guided the Anishinabek from the St. Lawrence River to the Midwest. The theme of the communion was of surviving storms and keeping faith. Sr. Patricia told the story of Elijah ascending to heaven and Jesus walking on the water. Each of the participants discussed what those stories meant to them and whether or not it related to events in their lives. In many ways, it was similar to Bible study, but more formal and ritualized. Many related the experiences of the apostles in the boat and the fear Elijah felt to the experiences Native people. The participants drew something from the stories as inspirations for dealing with the day-to-day hardships they encounter as individuals and the hardships that the community and other Native Peoples face. Many community members who identify as Christian place great emphasis on the meaning of the stories within their lives. They become literal in the sense that they relate to real life experiences. The reading of the Bible and traditional stories and narratives are a hermeneutic exercise and practice, that people to adapt ancient narratives and historical experiences to fit contemporary issues and needs, and to find direction for navigating the events in one's life (both positive and negative).

While the ritual in and of itself was Catholic in practice and philosophy, it did not necessarily focus on the position of the Catholic Church as being the "be all and end all" of religion and faith, but stressed the importance of keeping faith in whatever you believe, and most of all having faith in one's beliefs and self. Catholicism acts as a method of modeling behavior and living a faithful life. It also emphasizes the importance

of community. During these times, people reconnect with each other. In one sense, there is a transcendence of Christian and denominational dogmas and canons, while, others who feel that one should adhere to either a Christian or Traditional symbolism or meaning.

During the research period, some community members did question the use of Native symbolism and ritual within a Christian context. One community member mentioned that they preferred the monthly mass (and it is the only one they attend) because it is what they called a “real mass.” What they meant is that a Catholic mass should not use Native imagery unless it directly relates to Catholic teachings. Essentially, the service should not be “Catholic dressed in Indian clothing.” This perspective was not meant to be a negative statement against ANAWIM or that Christian and traditional beliefs cannot mix. Instead, the community members who feel this way, view religious iconography and spiritual symbolism have deep meaning and treated properly. Misuse of imagery can belittle the deep meanings within an image. Iconography conveys a message or messages, stories, narratives, history, and/or the connection of the viewer to past or important events and different groups within the Catholic Church in Chicago.

There are however, others who feel that there the use of Native imagery is not just window dressing. For this group, it unifies the traditional and Christian belief systems that are present within the community. The mass at St. Augustine’s follows Episcopal/Anglo-Catholic ritual according to Episcopal tradition, but the use of an eagle feather as an aspergillum (holy water sprinkler) and the use of the Cheyenne language for invocations creates a space that is uniquely Native. Sister Patricia noted that a churches acculturation into the community is important and is something that many Catholic

communities do not always do. Sister Patricia noted that acculturation of missionaries into a community is a way for the outsiders (missionaries) to understand the community and their beliefs. As a result, the Indianization of Catholic ritual is not simply to have greater appeal to the community, but to become part of a community's spiritual repertoire.

In the bigger picture, the use of Native imagery and iconography by ANAWIM and St. Augustine's demonstrates that they are community driven entities. The acculturation that is present in ANAWIM and St. Augustine's creates a different feeling than other mainstream Catholic or Christian denominations. The late Marcus Zimmerman (Menominee) noted that he favored the masses at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel because they were traditional Catholic masses, and he saw himself as a traditional Catholic. Marcus perceived the use of Native imagery at ANAWIM and St. Augustine's as being out of place out of place in terms of Catholic philosophy and cannon. However, this imagery made these organizations uniquely Native and made him feel that he was amongst friends and family. This latter part was far more important to him, than attending the services at ANWIM or St. Augustine's. The masses at Mt. Carmel fulfilled his identity as a Roman Catholic, but ANAWIM was the place that he could be both Catholic and Indian. This was something of immense importance to him (though he may never have said it public). It was at these places he found a completeness and reaffirmation of who he was as a Menominee and Catholic, and as a member of the Chicago American Indian community. Many in the ANAWIM and St. Augustine's communities shared this perspective and a reason why people attended services at these organizations, versus their local parishes.

The acculturation and syncretism practiced within the ANAWIM and St. Augustine's communities represents Native People making an alien belief system their own. One community member stated that:

"There is no difference between being Ojibwe and Catholic. The Catholic Church has been with the Anishinabek since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, it is pretty much one of many Ojibwe religions. But being Ojibwe is what I am, that will always remain close to me (Ojibwe male, age 32)."

The importance of maintaining tribal identity may play a role in making Christianity uniquely Native. Crucial to this is the importance of unity and respect for other tribes and spiritual ways. Shaun Maupin (Chahta), a Christian, did not believe in smudging as a way of purification, as there is no need for it. It is his belief in Christ as the savior that brings protection and balance (Maupin, 2008). With this said, when he was asked to smudge the American Indian Center for prayers, talking circles, or simply to start a meeting, he did so, not because he believed in its efficacy, but because he respected the beliefs of the American Indian Center staff and community members who believed and practiced this ritual. When assisting with a smudging ritual, he did so because he saw it as helping fellow community members, which corresponds to his Christian beliefs. It is these moments when a Christian can perform, what is technically a traditional ritual and simultaneously maintains their connection to the greater community and to their Christian identity in terms of service and sacrifice. These ideas of community, sacrifice, and service are not unique to Christian community members but are very alive and well amongst Traditionalist within the community.

*"In the Way of Our Ancestors..."*

Traditionalism is the most common of spiritual beliefs amongst community members. In the simplest sense, traditional beliefs are the spiritual, religious, and ethical foundations and traditions specific to a particular tribe. As with any belief, there are different degrees of practice and adherence influenced by family, clan, community, or regional traditions. Unlike Christian practices that take place in the public, the majority of ceremonies takes place in the private homes and celebrated with family and close friends. These ceremonies include the Diné First Laugh ceremony, First Moon (menses), house blessings, (medicine) bundle opening ceremonies, Ghost Feasts, naming ceremonies, and various healing ceremonies. These private ceremonies generally include community members of the same tribe, but members of other tribes can be present, due to their relationship to those sponsoring the ceremony. At certain times, there are public ceremonies such as pipe ceremonies, wakes, and sunrise ceremonies. These ceremonies tend to have participants from different tribes, but the ceremony itself may exist within multiple tribes or traditions. This is especially the case for pipe, sunrise, and sweat lodge ceremonies. There also ceremonies that lay somewhere in-between, in that they are open for anyone to attend, but people are invited. Some of these include sweat lodges and Native American Church ceremonies.

Many of the ceremonies that community members attend happen beyond the limits of Chicago in other states. Ceremonies such as Sundance, Midéwiwin, Big Drum, Long House, and other rituals associated with particular landscapes or communities. On a yearly basis, many community members travel to other states to attend ceremonies or tribal gatherings. For members of the Native American Church, they will attend ceremonies in the Chicago area or travel to other communities for services. Work

schedules often influence people's attendance of multi-day and out of state ceremonies. Interviewed participants and other community members noted that they often plan their vacations around these times from a couple of months to a year in advance. Those who do not have a flexible schedule may try to attend at least one ceremony a year, while others simply take advantage of ceremonies and rituals that occur within the community. Ceremonies like the weekly pipe ceremonies at the American Indian Center or the sweats held by community members then play an important part in how some community members, with limited transportation or busy schedules, are able to maintain their sacred traditions and identities in Chicago.

Traditional practitioners that live in the community often hold various ceremonies when needed. Pipe ceremonies and Sweat Lodges are very common and frequently take place. Pipe ceremonies take place for individuals or groups/families as a form of prayer and healing. Pipe ceremonies also occur before or during other ceremonies including sweat lodges, drum feasts, or naming ceremonies. Drum Feasts are ceremonies held once a year and can involve the feeding of sacred drums of the Big Drum or Midéwiwin religions, or drums used for powwows. These are community events and can involve members of different tribes. The purpose of the ceremony is to reaffirm a sense of community and camaraderie amongst the drum group and community at large. It also reminds people of the significance of the drum and reaffirms the sacred nature and meaning of the drum.

Every Wednesday since 2009, Jack Campbell (Menominee) has been conducting pipe ceremonies for those who need it or follow that tradition. Jack is a follower of the Midéwiwin and conducts the ceremony within this tradition. He shares his pipe and

ceremony with community members who follow the Midéwiwin, the pipe ceremonies of their respective tribe, or simply with those who view the pipe as one of many ways to pray. The pipe and its ceremony is a ceremonial institution that exists within many different tribes. The origins of the pipe and ceremonial tobacco use vary from tribe to tribe. On a community-wide level, the pipe and pipe ceremony plays an important role in the ritual and ceremonial complexes of many tribes, and each tribe has its own specific rituals and protocols, but there is an overall respect for the pipe and its symbolism and efficacy in prayer and healing. The institution of the pipe ceremony attracts traditionalists to pipe ceremonies at the American Indian Center, ANAWIM, or elsewhere. Along with a respect for the ceremony, there is respect for the pipe carrier and their knowledge. This respect is derived from their knowledge and understanding of the tradition. How Pipe Carriers conduct the ceremony varies from tribe to tribe, clan to clan, or family to family. If people like how a particular pipe carrier performs the ceremony, they may go to that one time after time. This is also true about sweats that occur within the community.

Like the pipe, many tribal traditions perform sweat lodges (each with its own variation). Similar to pipe ceremonies, community members are very choosy about what sweats they attend and who is sponsoring it. There are hobbyists and new age organizations that also sponsor sweats, which many in the community do not trust and see as non-Indians distorting and twisting a very sacred ceremony. It is because of the latter that information about sweat ceremonies within the Chicago Indian community are private and passed word of mouth. Often, when community members look for sweats or pipe ceremonies, they call the ANAWIM Center or the American Indian Center. Both organizations tend to be loci of ceremonial information and trusted sources. The sweat

and pipe ceremony are serious and meaningful ceremonies with strict protocols. Mariel Blacksmith (Oglala Lakota), a pipe carrier, noted that:

“MB: I have had people call the ANAWIM Center and ask where a sweat is and I can help them. What I usually do is sit down with them if they have not been to a sweat and talk to them about what they need to do when they get there and what it means to have...teach them so that they will do it in the right way.

*INT: So there is a vetting that happens to make sure people are going for the right reasons?*

MB: Yes, I understand that people have money problems and things [laughs]. That is one thing; you have to talk to them before you invite them out because you have to know the people you are going to sweat with, especially people who are going to smoke the pipe with you. You have to know who they are, you know, you have to have one heart. Your hearts have to all be together. For example in a healing ceremony we all pray for the sick person, so our hearts are together, we are all one heart, one mind. So that way it makes the prayer stronger that way.

*INT: So if someone wanted to go to a sweat but you felt they were not ready, what would you tell them?*

MB: I would tell them that I do not think they are ready to do this. I would come out and say this because to me they are not ready to do a sweat; it is a very sacred ceremony. You know a long time ago, they used to use hides for the sweat lodge and going into the sweat lodge is like going back into Mother Earth's womb...that is something very sacred...to pray and suffer a little bit for the world, you have to have people there who are in the right mind. Otherwise it will not work. I just like having people around you can talk to and who are serious about their prayers. I mean you are talking to *Tuŋkašila* (Grandfather). He is the creator of everything; you need to talk to him with a lot of respect, you need to be humble because that is what it is about (Muriel Blacksmith, Oglala Lakota, 2009).”

This word of mouth network and community organizations, community members who follow the sweat lodge tradition or those who would like to begin learning about it can find the proper people through this network. More importantly, it insures that the ceremonies they are attending or officiating are proper, with people in the right state of mind.



Three elements need to exist for sweats in the Chicago community to happen: a sponsor, a practitioner, and land/space. The location of the sweats has to do with the availability of appropriate type of land. Sweats require some sense of quiet and peace, and privacy. The locations of sweats tend to be outside of the city limits in the suburbs where people have space to conduct the ceremony in privacy. The sponsors of sweats tend to own the land on which the sweats occur and the practitioners usually come in from other communities. A practitioner is a person who has the required knowledge of how to conduct the ceremony and knows when the ceremony needs to happen. Two sweats occur in the community in which the sponsor and practitioner are the same people. One of the sweats follows the Lakota tradition and another follows the Midéwiwin tradition of the Oddawa. The latter practitioner recently (2010) learned how to conduct the sweat lodge that she usually sponsors. In previous years, she sponsored sweat lodges for community members who required sweats. In 2010, she learned from the proper way to conduct the sweat lodge by an Ojibwe woman and Midéwiwin society member. She learned the ceremony to perform it as needed, without waiting on a practitioner from another community to arrive. This was something she wanted to learn and felt that she was at a place in her life (late 40s) where she could handle the responsibility for the ceremony. Her learning this tradition also increased the number of legitimate practitioners within the community. Learning and having knowledge of this ceremony requires a level of responsibility on the part of practitioner, and as such, most people begin learning about this tradition in their late forties and fifties. In this way, the ceremonies are preserved and practiced in the proper way, and insures the longevity ceremonies.

Whether it is a pipe ceremony or sweat, social, familial, and tribal relationships play an important role in what influences community members' choice as to who they go to or which ceremony they participate in. Pipe and sweat ceremonies represent the heart of tribal tradition and identity for many. These ceremonies occur in urban areas, whether at people's homes or community centers allow community members to reconnect and in many ways reaffirm their tribal and spiritual identities, and transfers knowledge and history from one generation to the next. Traditionalists are also selective about which ceremonies they will attend and the relevance of it to their own traditions. Traditionalists attend ceremonies based on familial relationship and personal preference. Familial and social relationships also play a role in large community wide ceremonies. Two examples of this are the solstice sunrise ceremonies and doctoring visits by Skip and Babbette Sandman. Both represent specific tribal traditions and traditional practices shared by other tribes (in terms of structure and function).

Women in the Chicago Community have played an important role within the community in terms of spirituality and ceremony. Women run the two main sweat lodges in the community and women have operated organizations such as ANAWIM since its inception. A core of community women who have maintained and created many of the center's programs has held St. Augustine's together. The Women's Solstice group in terms of maintaining spiritual traditions is more often the women of the community who are actively involved in preserving and transmitting of these traditions. The Women's Solstice Group is interesting because it transmits and maintains tribal specific rituals associated with the sunrise ceremony and simultaneously maintains inter-tribal, familial, and community social bonds. In a traditional sense, this is nothing new, as one can find

this in the inter-tribal ceremonials in the Southwest and Northwest Coast. The solstice ceremony for traditional members of the community provides a space where they can greet the sun with prayers of renewal and for the health of the community, their families, the water, and the world.

The ceremony is a four-day event, beginning four days before the solstices and equinoxes. On the first day, the participants usually gather at Foster beach just before sunrise. The ceremony itself begins just as the aura of the sun is just peeking over the horizon. At this time, the participants are smudged or purified with cedar and sage and receive tobacco as prayer offerings. When the smudging is complete, the leader welcomes everyone and prayers begin. The people present passed an eagle feather or river rock (for women who are menstruating) around and as a person gets the feather or rock, they say what they are praying for aloud or pray in silence. The women sing four songs, with the fourth song ending as the sun is above the horizon. The songs are associated with the tribe of the person singing. After the songs are finished, the participants place the tobacco and their prayers into the burning cedar and sage. Everyone shares a drink of water or tea made from sage root and cedar. After the final prayer, two men place the ashes of the cedar, sage, and tobacco into the lake. This shows respect to the water beings/spirits that bring blessing of medicine and health to the community and the recognition of water as the source of life. The ceremony on the fourth day begins in the morning in the same way as the first day.

During the four days of the ceremony, the participants often fast or abstain from certain activities, which can vary from giving up smoking, unhealthy foods, certain activities, or as one male participant did in 2009, abstaining from food for the entire four

days. There are also talking circles that take place for the female participants, smaller night ceremonies that include smudging, prayer, and reflection, and for some individuals, they use this time for personal introspection. The point of these smaller rituals in some sense is to resolve personal or family issues, or reflect on where people are at and where they need to go. This part of the ceremony happens in more private and personal spaces. The ceremony ends on the fourth day with a feast at sunset on the day of the solstice or equinox. The feast in the evening consists of all of the people who participated in the morning ceremonies or come to show their support of the people who fasted for the four days. The ending feast includes reflections of the previous days and a final prayer. The feast often ends with participants feeling revitalized. The various rituals in this ceremony (the sharing of water and tobacco) not only emphasize the relationship between the participants and the natural and spirit world, the social bonds between the participants are also renewed.

The leadership of the ceremony is female, but men also play a crucial role. Just as the ceremony connects different tribes, it also connects men and women within the community. In theory, the Solstice Sunrise ceremony represents the community in a microcosm. As these individuals fast for the four days and welcome the new sun of each season, they carry the thoughts, concerns, prayers, hopes, and ideals that many in the community embrace and maintain. This ceremony allows people to meet on a quarterly basis to reconnect with their goals, values, and commitments in their life and reflect on where they are at and where they need to go. One participant noted why he liked attending the sunrise ceremony.

“When there are many people I know, trust, and respect, I will come out with those people, and I will celebrate together. A good example is the ceremony on the equinoxes and the solstices. I will go out with them to the beach and they celebrate this tradition. I think that is a great thing. I like to do it and it makes me feel good when I get up and do it (Alan Turner, Lakota/African American/Irish, 2006).”

Similar to sweat lodge and pipe ceremonies, the participants renew their faith and identity as Native People and human beings. In a similar way, the doctoring visits of Skip and Babbette Sandmen provide community members with another path to renewal and reconnect with their traditional ways.

Skip and Babbette Sandman are medicine people from the Midéwiwin tradition of the Anishinabek (Ojibwe, Pottawatomie, and Oddawa). Since the 1990s, they have regularly come to Chicago from Duluth, Minnesota to perform doctoring, consultations, and ceremonial functions for community members. Most of the people who see them are from Midwestern tribes where the Midéwiwin is common (Anishinabe, Menominee, and Hoçąk). There are also traditionalists who follow other spiritual traditions (Big Drum, Native American Church, and Syncretic). The ceremonies follow Anishinabek spirituality and religion, but anyone is welcome to participate. Their visits can vary depending on how much time they can spend in Chicago and what ceremonies community members require. One weekend in November 2008, Skip and Babbette came for their regular visit.

In many ways, the rituals and ceremonies they perform are similar to the larger seasonal Midéwiwin ceremonies that occur in the medicine lodge structure, where the activities are visible to people sitting outside of the lodge. Depending on what ceremonies community members require, the activities associated with their visits can vary. For example, during one all day public ceremony they conducted two naming ceremonies, the

giving of a pipe bundle, taught people the songs associated with harvesting sage and cedar for ceremonies, and revealed a vision and its message regarding the Chicago Indian community. They also performed the Healing Blanket ceremony for two people. The Healing Blanket Ceremony/ritual is a new ceremony created by an Ojibwe elder in Minneapolis as a ceremony to help heal people with AIDS and other illnesses. There are songs, prayers with this ceremony and the American Indian Center received a healing blanket bundle from Skip, and Babbette for community members needed healing. On other visits, they met with people individually, while on another visit they conducted a cleansing/purification ceremony for the American Indian Center.

During one visit, Skip shared a vision he had regarding the state of the community (Sandman, 2009). The community was undergoing flux and change during the time of this research, and as such, there were important issues in the community that needed attention. Of these was maintaining a sense of unity within the community. Skip talked about a vision he had and its relevance to the Chicago and other Native communities. In the vision, he encountered a council of *Manitouk* (forces) and animals in the middle of an intense discussion. When it was over, the animals spoke to him and said that they were speaking on behalf of humans to the *Manitouk* to grant people the power to re-learn and maintain their traditional ways, including language and ceremonial knowledge. Crucial to this was the commitment to stop disruptive community behavior (gossiping, etc...) and to build strong community ties. This also included upholding the traditions of the tribe(s), to be productive members of the community, and to end negative gossip (Sandman, 2009).

When Skip finished speaking, people lined up to drink cedar and sage root water (blessed water). The purpose of the ritual was to join the group as one people, one

community. It reminded people to revisit the importance of one's tribal traditions, and to reinforce one's faith and belief. After everyone drank the water, the ceremony ended with a feast. The water ritual was conducted to renew people's faith and commitment to help the community. It reminded people to maintain their traditions and most importantly, to pass on their traditions to the next generation. The vision enforced the connection to traditions, identity, and community. The message of the animals in the dream was that the medicine is there but you have to want it in your life. In addition, if you want to make a positive impact on your community, you have to be committed to it and when you feel overwhelmed, to know that your traditions and ancestors are there to support and help you accomplish your vision.

The above examples are representative of some of the traditional beliefs and practices that occur throughout the community. Ceremonies may vary at certain points, but there is very little change and ceremonies like the sweat lodge and pipe ceremony sit at the very core of many tribal identities. These ceremonies travel with people wherever they go. The above ceremonies are also good representations of how community members stay connected. There are also ceremonies that bring all of the community together. In the Chicago American Indian community, funerals and wakes bring all aspects of the community together in terms of tribes and belief systems.

#### *A Celebration of Life: Death, Renewal, and Community Bonds:*

Funerals and wakes are common to many communities and if you ever wanted to see a large portion of the Indian community at once, funerals, wakes, memorial ceremonies, and ghost feasts, are often the times when this is possible. In many ways, it is

through a community member's death that people from all lifestyles, tribe, and faith will come together for support. There is a remembrance of the deceased and old friendships and acquaintances are renewed. People who have left the community often return and in the face of death, a celebration of life occurs.

Within the Chicago American Indian community, funerals, and on occasion Ghost Feasts, are among the few ceremonies held in public. They are times when community members reveal their sacred sides to the larger community. During this research, there were seven funerals, two memorials, and a Ghost Feast. The wakes were often open casket and it was common for Father Powell, from St. Augustine's Center, to offer prayers for the deceased and their family. Regardless of faith, a prayer from Father Powell would start the ceremony. Many of the people who passed away were long time community members or their families had lived in Chicago since the 1950s. Father Powell knew many of the deceased and their families and was less in the role of priest and more as an elder family member or friend. Elder or respected family members also spoke on behalf of the deceased or deceased's family. After the initial prayer or welcoming, the funerary rites would begin. The rite followed the tradition of the deceased, which sometimes followed the Native American Church, Midéwiwin, Big Drum, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, or a secular memorial and remembrances. There are general memorial ceremonies such the All Souls Day mass, which began in 2005 by ANAWIM and St. Augustine's Centers to memorialize all of the deceased in the community. This ceremony reflected the Catholic holiday of All Souls and All Saints, but also included traditional spirit plates to feed the dead and the ending of mourning cycles for families and individuals in the community.



Funerals are also times when people bring out their individual tribal protocols and traditions. Some examples include Diné who maintain the taboo of not touching anything dead by keeping a distance from the corpse. But they participate to honor the deceased and show support to their family. Ojibwe, Lakota, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, and Cree will give gifts tobacco to the family and deceased to show respect and condolences. Other traditions bring food for the feast or sit up with the body. Ultimately, by dealing with death in a tribal specific way, community members show their support to other community members from other tribes in their own unique way. This in turn builds and affirms community bonds.

Along with sacred traditions, some funerals, wakes, and memorials will combine secular and sacred elements. The memorial ceremony for local Chicago poet, Edward Donald Two-Rivers (Ojibwe) on January 9, 2009, was a secular gathering of family, friends, acquaintances, and community members celebrating the life of a beloved community member. The ceremony started with a prayer by long time friend, Father Powell, and the creation of a spirit plate by Eddie's children. These in many ways were the only sacred rituals performed during the memorial. Following this was what could be seen as a secular ritual of retelling and honoring Eddie's life and works. However, there was something also sacred about this and this may have been a moment where the sacred and secular intermingle to find a perfect balance. The ceremony included the reading of his poetry, the telling of stories about his life, and the deep feelings and thoughts by his family, friends, and local poets and actors. During the funeral service, participants also honored the late poet Jean LaTraile (Oneida/Ojibwe), who passed away earlier in 2008. Of special note was another poet, Marcus Zimmerman (Menominee) who read Eddie's

poems and his own poem to memorialize his good friend. Unknown at the time, Marcus would join Eddie and Jean on the other side a week later.

Of all of the funerals and wakes during this research, one in particular stood out. It was in fact not a funeral, but a celebration of life. The funeral or anti-funeral of Josephine Blackbird-Fox (Omaha) was interesting because it brought some 400-500 people together in one night, representing all aspects, factions, cliques, families, and generations in the Chicago Indian community. Most interestingly, it was the first funeral where the focus was not on death or passing, but a celebration of life. The following is an account of this ceremony.

Josephine was born in 1923 in Rosalie, Nebraska near the Omaha Indian Reservation and was one of the Founding members of the All Tribes American Indian Center (now the American Indian Center) in 1952, where she became the first official bookkeeper. In public, she was very quiet and shy, but during her time in the community, she was active in all aspects of community life. She was a foster parent, helped stranded people and families that became stuck in Chicago on their way home or to a job in another state (Blackbird, 2008). She supported her husband's initiative, the Great Lakes Indian Craftsmen, and the Chicago blades (all Native Hockey team) (Blackbird, 2008). She supported and maintained her tribal traditions and was an expert bead worker, and was a devoted community volunteer who cooked for many people and events.

In late September of 2008, Josephine became ill. At age eighty-four, she had lived a good and full life, however both she and her family knew that was soon ending. The days up until her death, her daughter, Cyndee Fox-Star, her grandchildren, relatives, and friends stayed by her side. They had brought her home to be with her family and she

prepared herself for her new journey. Cyndee's uncle (an Oddawa) Josephine's brother-in-law, came down from Michigan and began the funerary rites in Midéwiwin tradition. Family members built a funerary fire, which kept burning for four days straight and was maintained by family and friends from the Chicago Indian community. People gathered sage from the AIC Medicinal Prairie Garden for the ceremony. It seemed the most appropriate place to gather sage, as the AIC was Josephine's second home for most of her life. Finally, a pipe ceremony and a sweat lodge at Cyndee's house, attended by family and community members. Those gathered around her said prayers and sang songs to prepare her for her journey. When the four-day ceremony concluded, Josephine passed on.

Cyndee mentioned that her mom did not want a wake or funeral, but instead have a party to celebrate her life, where the community could come together and enjoy themselves. She had already had the ceremony and after her death, she felt it was not necessary for people to be sad. Cyndee and her Family held a celebration of life feast on October 17, 2008. People began preparing for the feast around noon. Tables in the Diane Maney Tribal Hall (at the AIC) were set up for the large group of people that were expected. On the south side of the hall, an elders table was set up. Cyndee placed sage and sweet grass braids gathered from the garden at the center of the elders table to mark the place where Josephine would sit. The evening began around six o'clock and the tribal hall was already filling with people. Many of the people in attendance had not been seen in the community for a long time, and the air was filled with people catching up, jokes, and the introductions of spouses and children. However, despite the casualness of the evening, a final funerary ceremony took place.

Cyndee's uncle, Alex addressed the attendees, welcomed, and thanked them for coming to the feast. The blessing of the food started with a prayer from Father Powell in Omaha, and Cyndee's uncle in Oddawa. After the prayers, Cyndee's uncle made a spirit plate and placed it in the seat of honor, where Josephine would sit. The food was for her to eat until the final part of the ceremony concluded. He then took some of the sage from the place setting in front of Josephine's chair, placed it in an abalone shell. As people were getting their food, Cyndee and her three children gathered at the stage where they played music from Josephine's favorite singer, Don Ho. As the song ended, they brought out a birthday cake for Josephine and all of the family blew out the candles. There were tears of happiness and people at the tables laughed and applauded. When everyone got their food, Alex prayed again and spoke about Josephine and her life, followed by the first honor song. Some people stood, while others continued their conversations.

The evening happened in this manner: people socialized and at certain points, Cyndee's uncle would offer prayers and the drummers sang an honor song. There was ceremony for those who followed or wanted to participate, and there was socializing for those who wanted to remember their friend and experiences they had. The point was that everyone was happy and there were no tears. It was sacred and secular all in one. The evening was long, but near the end, the final prayer was said and the drummers sang the fourth honor song. As everyone started to leave, there was an immense feeling of happiness and good will. Many people walked past Josephine's chair and place at the elder's table, saying good-bye to old friends. As people left, many noted that it was nice to just sit and talk to everyone, which was something that had not happened in a long

time. Many seniors looked forward to the next gathering like this, where people could sit, eat, and talk to each other as a community.

### **Sacred Cityscapes:**

Throughout the city, there exists a network of seen and unseen sacred sites. Some are permanent natural features, while others exist briefly as people gather for ceremony. Sacred sites in Chicago are as varied as the tribes and individuals that make up the community. Sacred sites are the places that have deep spiritual meaning for community members. This can vary from the Lakefront, to the chapel at St. Augustine's Center, to someone's backyard. Sacred sites are the places where people hold their ceremonies, collect medicines, or mark the spot of a significant moment. Sacred space/sites within the Chicago American Indian community are comprised of public places such as community centers, natural landscapes, and private spaces such as the homes of community members. What determines a place as sacred can vary from a geographic feature that holds significance for a particular tribal tradition as a place where spirits dwell, a place where a significant event occurred (historically or recently), a place that holds significance to an individual's family, or simple a place where someone feels calm. Lake Michigan, for example, is a sacred site to many tribes native to the Midwest. It is sacred because it is where powerful beings and *Manitouk* dwell and has provided sustained many of the local tribes for centuries.

Public spaces such as community organizations are often secular in nature. However, when ceremonies take place within their walls, they become sacred space. Community members utilize the American Indian Center to hold drum feasts, funerals,

pipe ceremonies, and masses. When ceremonies occur in the senior room or tribal hall (the main public spaces in the building), they cease to be mundane, and become sacred. However, the sacredness is temporary, because when the ceremony concludes, the room or hall returns to a profane nature. What is important is that the space exists for ceremonies to take place. The local Native American Church conducted its all night ceremonies at Native American Educational Services (NAES) College in the 1990s and the Chicago Native American Urban Indian Family Retreat Center conducted community pipe ceremonies and sweats in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Both organizations (no longer existing) focused on secular pursuits whether education, or family and youth activities, yet when the community needed a place to perform or carry out ceremonies, these organizations helped by providing space. Temporal sacred sites such as the AIC and other organizations fulfill an important function in maintaining not only secular social bonds, but also the spiritual bonds of the community. The Diane Maney Tribal Hall and Senior's Room at the American Indian Center become sacred space during the Midéwiwin doctoring ceremonies during the visits of Skip and Babbette Sandman. The traditional lodge structure is not used, but the central elements of the lodge are present, namely the sacred fire. The lack of a lodge structure is due to the constraints of the AIC's use and room layout. But this type of set-up, a mobile lodge, is not distinctly a response living in an urban area.

Community members who follow the Midéwiwin often talked about how their relatives living on the reservation during the 1920s-1970s, performed the rites in their homes. Like many other traditional Native practices and beliefs, the Midéwiwin was outlawed in the United States and Canada as part of assimilation policies to dissolve

traditional Native culture and identity. People spoke about seeing burn marks on the kitchen floor, asking their aunts, uncles, and grandparents what they were, and being told the scorch mark was the place where the sacred fire sat. For some, this was their introduction to the Midéwiwin at a young age. Due to the pressures of the law and fear of being arrested for practicing their beliefs, many Anishinabek and Hočąk had to abandon the physical lodge structure and create a temporal lodge that maintained the core and central elements of the sacred fire, the “Little Boy” (water) drum, the songs, the center post, an area to hang sacred bundles, and room for people to gather. In much the same way, a cast iron skillet or pot is used to house the sacred fire for ceremonies at the American Indian Center. Of course the difference today is that is not illegal to participate in the Midéwiwin. The lodge structure becomes mobile through the sacred fire, the songs, and the associated ceremonies that can transform the mundane space of the AIC Tribal Hall or Senior Room into the Midéwiwin lodge structure, only to return to the mundane world when the ceremonies are finished.

For other organizations such as the ANAWIM and St. Augustine’s Centers occupy a different position as sacred spaces. The ANAWIM Center and St. Augustine’s Center for the American Indian are primarily religious institutions. St Augustine’s Center, though founded as a social service organization, and ANAWIM started as a spiritual center through the Chicago Catholic Archdiocese provide spiritual space for community members. St. Augustine’s has a dedicated chapel space and ANAWIM utilizes a large room connected to their main office for social gatherings and a chapel. The distinguishing features of these two spaces that make them unique from other

community organizations and other Christian churches are their altars. The altars reflect the perspectives of the community and the missions of these two organizations.

The (old) altar at ANAWIM is located on the east wall and combines both Catholic and traditional Native American iconography and symbolism. The late Eugene Pine (Hoçak) an acclaimed local artist created the crucifix behind the altar. The cross consists of two rectangular boards with a round plaque in the middle. The image upon it is that of the Virgin Mary and Jesus (Mary holding the earth), looking over the earth on a backdrop of stars. At the center of the cross is the night bird of Native American Church. Eugene was a Peyotist (Cross Fire/Wilson Path) and the cross reflects this, with images of the crescent moon altar, the gourd rattles, peyote fans, the Road Man's staff, stars, and the night bird as the Holy Spirit. The altar holds a pottery chalice from Acoma Pueblo, an abalone shell to burn sage and cedar, and two icons. One is an icon of the Apache Christ and the other is of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, the Lilly of the Mohawks. Kateri is currently one miracle away from canonization as a saint, joining St. Juan Diego as the second Native American saint. Kateri is a major figure within the ANAWIM community because she represents the convergence of Native and Christian spirituality. More importantly, Kateri also represents healing and renewal. The new altar at the Kateri Center of Chicago is part of an existing chapel at St. Benedict's Parish Church and Convent. The elements of the old altar were placed in their new home, with the addition of a large wood sculpture of Kateri Tekakwitha.

The altar at St. Augustine's is simple, yet reflects the heritage of its community. N. Scott Mommaday (Kiowa) created the tabernacle, a local Ojibwe woodcarver carved the altar, and a Tlingit artist carved a cedar statue of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ



Child. A significant sculpture found within St. Augustine's Center hangs behind the altar. Carved by Southern Cheyenne artist Rick West, the crucifix, like the icon of the Blessed Kateri, represents the union of Native and Christian beliefs. The crucifix, carved from the fork (Y shaped section of the trunk) of a lightning struck tree, depicts Jesus as a Cheyenne sundancer. The significance of this crucifix applies to both Native (Cheyenne) and Christian perspectives. It is not simply Jesus as an Indian, but it represents the ultimate sacrifices made for the good of community, humanity, and the world. The image of Christ on the cross and the sundancer hanging from the center pole of the lodge is a material expression of this sacrifice. Father Powell noted, the sacrifice made by the Cheyenne sundancer, is to regenerate the community, and confirms one's faith, belief, and responsibility to world. Philosophically, this parallels Jesus hanging on the cross as a sacrifice to free humanity and bring salvation to the world. The crucifix that hangs above the altar and the images of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Kateri Tekakwitha has deep meanings for many Native People. These icons primarily unify Native and Christian belief systems at their core, so to use them as simple window-dressing would reduce their importance as something sacred to something that verges on the mundane. Community members (regardless of tradition) are very careful when drums, Native languages, and other Native elements integrated within the mass or other Christian rituals.

These altars and iconography are significant because unlike many of the altars in mainstream churches, they heavily reflect the personality of the community, not only as American Indian, but also as a community of multiple tribes. The use of non-Christian iconography demonstrates the inclusion of the traditional beliefs of the community. In a recent mass, celebrating the feast day the Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, Father Hines in his

homily noted that Kateri was a bridge between Native and Christian cultures and in a large sense represents a unity amongst diverse peoples. Kateri herself was half Algonkin and half Mohawk, the daughter of two warring tribes, and she was a Roman Catholic. In a similar vein to the Sundancer Christ, she embodies the value of sacrifice. The idea of sacrifice for the greater good is a value and perspective found between both Native and Christian traditions and this is something unites the two traditions for both the St. Augustine's and ANAWIM communities.

Beyond the walls of community organizations, the natural landscapes of Chicago land provide another space for community members to conduct public and private ceremonies and rituals. "Our sacred spaces are the places where our medicines grow," was something mentioned many times throughout this research. Despite being covered in concrete and developed, many of the prairie plants that are used for ceremonies and as foods and medicines still grow in the city, popping up through the concrete or growing in parks and forest preserves. Some of these natural spaces are human made such as parks and gardens. The AIC Medicinal Prairie Garden is one such place. It contains one hundred and seventy-two species of plants, grasses, sedges, shrubs, fungi, and trees which are native to the Chicago region and utilized for ceremonies, medicines, and food. The AIC Medicinal Prairie Garden originated as a response to community members' needs for ceremonial plants. Since 2004, it has provided community members with medicines in the broadest sense of the word. Whether it is gathering sage and cedar for ceremonies, wild mints for flu and colds, or simply a place to find peace, many community members have found it to be a location to find their center, reflect on essential matters within their life, and a place for renewal and maintenance of sacred

knowledge and traditions. A community member once noted that when they felt sad about the loss of their close friend, they would sit in the garden and watch the flowers sway in the breeze, and would feel happier and refreshed. They could not explain it, but they said something in the garden just made them feel better.

Moreover, maybe that is what is important about sacred places in general. Landforms tell parts of a people's history or remind people of important aspects or experiences of their lives'. Localities in Chicago such as lakes, rivers, and their ecosystems are part of that sacred tradition for many Native peoples. This can be specific to the Chicago River or Lake Michigan in or simply the fact that they are large, flowing bodies of water. The sacredness and significance to individuals and tribes is variable. A landform along the lake, for example, may reveal itself as a sacred place to multiple people and visited throughout the year. While in other cases, like the Solstice/Equinox ceremony that is held at Foster Avenue beach, occur in full view, yet many of the joggers, dog walkers, and people passing by rarely notice the group of people burning cedar and sage, welcoming the new sun. Sacred places in Chicago are often places that people connect to on a spiritual or emotional level. They are places that people can practice their rituals or transcend the mundane. They are places that have deep meaning and significance on a personal and cultural level.

Homes are another significant space in the ceremonial life of the community. Many of the participants noted that much of their sacred identity is centered on the home and that many of the ceremonies they attend either happen within their, or the homes of friends and family members. The home is the reminder of the basis of many spiritual and religious traditions and the family (immediate and extended) is central to the creation,

transmission, and maintenance of sacred identity and tradition. The home, like community organizations or natural features/landscapes acts as a centering mechanism that establishes and restores harmony to the self, and through the self to the rest of the community. On an individual level, these spaces transect each other and become significant for different moments within one's life. They connect the individual to community, to ancestral landscapes, and nexus of family. Like many aspects of the community, sacred spaces are diverse and varied, but they maintain a core tradition whose external features evolve to fit current needs and environments.

### **Summary:**

Durkheim noted that community was the foundation of religion (Durkheim, 1975). However, community in terms of spirituality and religion in Chicago Native American community acts more as the binding mechanism that links separate individuals and families within a common belief system or philosophy than its source. The social interactions between these groups are important building blocks that bring substance and meaning that shapes religious and spiritual expression. The above examples are not definitive, but provide a window into how each belief system or ceremony maintains its uniqueness and consistency. Furthermore, it is simultaneously fashioned into something that fits the social and spiritual needs of the greater community through the interactions of the various cultural, tribal, kinship, and individual aspects that exist within it. In some ways, living in an urban area where a larger Native identity exists and cooperation takes precedence in terms of spirituality and religious expression contributes to this. This is not to say that tribalism does not occur.

The history of the Chicago Native American community has periods of divisions over political, organizational, inter-family, or tribal disagreements or fractioning. Nevertheless, despite these particular divisions, the religious and spiritual aspect of the community tends to bring people together and a mutual respect for other tribes and individual traditions upheld. In the time that this research occurred, the community experienced a reexamination of community needs and requirements. This spurred a rise in ceremonial activities and interest after a period of low public spiritual expression. Organizational heads and staff, along with community members have turned to their spiritual traditions to create a new path towards balance in the community. The religious and spiritual characteristics of the community are the mechanisms that create a sense of community interconnectedness and bind different levels of sacred identity.

Community organizations play a major role in facilitating and exposing community members to many sacred traditions. In some case like the American Indian Center, it provides a space for community members to perform their ceremonies, while others like ANAWIM and St. Augustine's, act as place where Christian community members can pray and gather. In the urban context, community organizations provide the space for community members to gather and express their beliefs. When ceremonies or masses occur, a building or office, primarily utilized for secular activities, transforms into a sacred space. When the ceremonies are finished, the space returns to its secular nature, but a memory survives, connected to a particular building. This was the case for the American Indian Center. Community members and some participants noted that the building is an integral component to ceremonial events that transpired within its walls. Buildings like the AIC are the places community goes for funerals, feasts, and naming

ceremonies. It is where ANAWIM and St. Augustine's Center come together to celebrate the high holy days. On their own, ANAWIM and St. Augustine's Center are the places for confirmations, baptisms, prayer circles, or pipe ceremonies.

Community organizations provide places for community members to practice their traditions with other community members in a public context. They are the spaces in which the individual and communal aspects of the sacred can intermingle and coexist. Along with buildings and offices, the green spaces, Lake Front, forest preserves, and backyards of Chicago become sacred spaces for many community members. Unlike community organizations, these spaces are where the sacred exists on individual levels. Regardless of tradition, the open and green areas of Chicago allow people to connect with the divine and experience the sacred on their own terms. These spaces provide the privacy and quiet necessary for meditation and self-reflection. The physical spaces community members utilize for sacred tasks and rituals, outside of family, create the secondary bonds between community members and the sacred. They are the meeting grounds between community members, traditions, and sacred experience. Sacred spaces facilitate the interactions that influence and affect the development of spiritual and tribal/Native identity for individuals and the community as a whole.

**CHAPTER 5:**  
**THE INTERGENERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SACRED IDENTITY**  
**OVER TIME**

*“You ask what spirituality is, I do not know. All I know is that I am sitting here and there is a reason for it, for you and for Grandfather. There is something for me personally that I don’t have to understand. I just have to feel it and acknowledge it (Mila Smith, Tulé Inuit, 2007).”*

This chapter will examine how sacred identity develops over time and how it affects the development of individual tribal ethnic identity. The sacred aspect of ethnic identity is not something that is automatic or “in the genes,” but is something that is taught, learned, and shaped by life experiences. During this research, an interesting and unexpected pattern emerged from the interview data. Through the life stories of experiences, revelations, and reflections of the sacred, an evolution of tribal and spiritual identity surfaced. Simultaneously, as the participants’ spirituality often appeared in the decisions and choices they made when faced with important events and transitions in their life. Just as social transactions influence people on the group level, they also affect people on the personal level.

Social transactions introduce people to the ethnic identity of their family or community. However, what exactly does this mean? People have to make sense of what it means to be part of an ethnic group. When someone states his or her tribal identity, there has to be meaning behind that statement. Meaning comes from experiences within their family’s traditions and the various practices of other community members, and other

ethnic groups and people. The life stories of the participants noted the changes in perspective in terms of spirituality, as they grew older and experienced more things beyond their familial culture. From the distance, the significance and meaning of sacred practices and their relationship to tribal identity became apparent.

The data for this chapter came from Question Group 2, which focused on individual perspectives of religion and spirituality. Question one, “How would you describe your personal religious or spiritual beliefs,” was the main question for this group. There were subsequent questions asking where people expressed their beliefs and with whom they celebrated. For the later, family was the common response. This was not surprising as many of the ceremonial aspects of the community are family based, but the responses to the main question longer and complex. The answer to the first question often began with the participants explaining their current state of spirituality or religiosity, followed by how they arrived to this point.

The interviews of the forty-one participants were placed into the following age cohorts; 18-30 age cohort had eleven participants; 31-50 had twenty-one; the 51+ had nine; and the . These age cohorts reflect a pattern found in the life stories of the older participants and chosen based on noticeable changes in perspective towards tribal and sacred identity of the participants. The cohorts from the interview data generated a pattern of shared experience and developmental stages the participants encountered, as they grew older. The narrative data was divided into three themes to analyze the cohorts. The 18-30 focuses on experimentation with other beliefs systems or a deeper examination of the traditions of their family. The theme for the 31-50 age cohort is finding their spiritual place and developing an understanding of the meanings of cultural practice and



identity. The participants in the 51+ age cohort have completed the journey and found the meanings of tribal identity and have merged their sacred and tribal identities into a cohesive whole. This chapter will examine each of these cohorts with some case studies, followed by a discussion and summary. However, first there will be a brief discussion of spiritual and ethnic identity as it exists for youth and teens. The information for this section is based on the experiences of the participants when they were youth and teens.

### *The Foundation:*

The pattern begins when the participants were children and youth viewing religion and spirituality as a material activity or “something the family does” without any thought about why they do it. This lack of understanding can explain why youth, at times, may not seem interested. Debra Valentino (Oneida/Menominee, age 47) recalled her experience in grade school when asked about her personal spiritual beliefs.

“At Catholic school I never really quite felt like I fit in, you know, I didn't really understand that when I was a kid, of course. However, as I look back and I have had several conversations with people over about some of this stuff, I never was comfortable with the Catholic Church. Of course, I didn't understand that cause I really did not grow up with understanding who I was or where I came from and any of that stuff (Debra Valentino, Oneida/Menominee, age 47).”

Family and adults have an important influence the way youth perceive spirituality and/or religion. The participants with children indicated that they sent their children to either Catholic school or to church to provide them with some kind of spiritual structure. Whether or not their child followed that particular faith was unimportant. The parents felt it was more important for their children to have a basic spiritual foundation, from which they could build upon and inform their choices, as they grew older. Conversely, some

participants noted that their families did not provide a spiritual foundation for them. Instead, their spiritual foundation began as adolescents who observed the traditions of their friends or other community members. They indicated that they would go to church or ceremonies with their friends because it looked interesting and they liked the performance of rituals. The latter group also liked the community aspect of the ceremonies.

Sometimes families did not explain what was going on and the participants stated they often went to ceremonies or mass because it was something their family did. In other cases, the simple aspects of the sacred tend to take hold on youth more than larger, complex ceremonies. This is especially true with praying. Felicia Peters noted that when she would pray with the children in the American Indian Center's Positive Paths afterschool program, they were very excited about praying and took turns at leading the prayer. Whether they believed in the concepts or not, children are aware of spiritual practices and are active participants in religious/spiritual rituals. They may be imitating the adults or they may see something in the act that speaks to them on their own level. Prayer is also more spiritual than religious because anyone can pray. There is no need to belong to a specific faith or belief system. In terms of knowing one's tribal identity, Felicia noted that the children were very interested and engaged when she did activities that focused on learning about their tribal traditions. She found it hard in some ways because the youth in the program represent different tribes, but in all, it worked out well. She noted that youth are interested in who they are as tribal people and what that means. What they need are outlets to explore and the encouragement from their families and other adults in the community to push spirituality. Thus, it is important for families and

community organizations to provide opportunities for youth to learn about cultural and spiritual practices and traditions. This occurs in various forms throughout the community and vary from learning about the identification and use of plants, smudging, and attending ceremonies, to learning powwow dancing and receiving catechism. All of these provide youth the opportunity to explore the sacred aspects of the community, while simultaneously learning about the traditions of their own families and tribes.

The teenage years are when youth begin questioning and exploring what spirituality and religion means for them. Often they turned away from their families and looked to other sources to find these answers. Alternatively, in some cases, they just ignored the idea of spirituality. As they moved into their twenties, there was still some experimentation, with a focus on their place in the larger society and/or community. By the late twenties and early thirties, the participants found their spiritual niche. These choices are influenced by their experiences and questioning that began as teenagers. Many saw the connections between the spiritual and tribal identities of their tribe(s) and families.

Adding to this is the fact that many Native youth are growing up in an urban area with a wider array of choices in terms of spiritual paths and perspectives of identity compared to a rural area, and further compounded by the dispersion of the Native population in Chicago. Some youth may not have direct access to other tribal members with knowledge about cultural and spiritual traditions. This makes it seem that maintaining tribal identity would be impossible for urban Indian youth and adults. However, regardless of limitations of the overall environment, the degree of knowledge or exposure to other Native peoples, there is still a sense and realization of being Native

and being unique from other ethnic groups. Despite not having a centralized community, Native people within Chicago find others through public events like powwows or through utilizing the different community organizations.

Interactions with youth from other ethnic groups are another factor that can affect the development of Native identity among youth in Chicago. Many urban Indian youth have grown up and attend school and interact with youth from other ethnic groups on a daily basis. Observing youth from other ethnic communities express their own cultural identity, challenges Indian youth to ask questions about their own tribal identities and what that means. Some participants noted that when they saw how committed other youth were to practicing their heritage; it made them think about their own heritage. From these interactions, especially during their teen years, many participants noted that it provided questions to ask their parents, grandparents, and other relatives and community members. At the same time, these interactions connected them to a larger network of ethnic communities in the Chicago area.

#### *18-30 Age Cohort:*

The participants in this cohort are eager to explore the possibilities that exist within the city. This age cohort was far more experimental with spirituality and religion. Many had a “go forward and see what happens” approach to spirituality. Others still followed their family’s traditions, but were interested to see its limits and make it relevant for the world they live in. On one level, the drive for this exploration is a natural curiosity of what lays beyond their family and community circle. On another level, there is a certain amount of effort to understand the world around them. What emerged in this

cohort are young adults making sense of their family and tribal traditions, how they fit into the current world, and whether these traditions are relevant or not within their lives.

When asked about their current spiritual beliefs, one participant noted:

“I don’t believe much in religion. I like the ideas behind religion like how it is for peace and coming together. But then there are other parts it’s almost where they are not coming together, where like they oust people if you don’t believe...if you don’t follow their beliefs, they kind of think of you as an outsider or sort of still to this day are trying to force their religion on you. And that’s the part of it I really don’t like...Being Catholic didn’t work for me. I didn’t like the organization. The whole mourning our religion almost, because it wasn’t like a celebration, it was more like I would go to church and it would be like a down note. It was alright by me, but from there I believed the part where we have a soul and that there is something that makes people work and act certain ways, and I think that is more of the spiritual side that I have. Because it is something that is unexplained, like how is a murder a murder? What’s wrong with that guy, you know. And could it be there is no religion? I don’t think so because that’s organization working and I think it really comes down to yourself, spiritually, how you connect with the world. And I think that really ties in with being Lakota because or Native, because the belief that we are one with the world around us. And I think that I can say I am spiritual but not religious (Thomas Heaton, Lakota/Puerto Rican/German, age 19).”

The overlying belief of Roman Catholicism and Lakota belief systems in the home provided Tommy with a foundation to support a belief or disbelief in the sacred. He favored the Lakota belief system over Catholicism owing to its relevance to his life and some influence from his family.

The preference for the spiritual side and the concept of an active and living world held more relevance to his life. At the time of the interview, he was learning Lakota traditions and was interested in attending Sundance. More important, understanding the conceptual framework of Lakota beliefs and traditions was more important than simply practicing a specific ritual. This is representative for many in this cohort, in that there is a preference to understand the inner workings, principles, and concepts of a belief system,

beyond simply practicing the tangible aspects. This is a common theme within this particular age cohort and demonstrates a new level of understanding the sacred and its connection to personal and cultural identity.

This stage of life found the many of the participants questioning the traditions and beliefs of their families. This questioning is less a rejection of cultural identity, than an opportunity for people to gain a better perspective of their individual and family identities. In some cases, ideological conflicts arose between the individuals and their family. Spiritual matters tended to be the catalyst for participants to differentiate themselves from their parents or grandparents. One participant stated:

“I would say some of my family, like I talk to some of my younger cousins and I also have a big influence on them...and I have noticed that some of the things I noticed that I have said or things that I have challenged my grandmother [she is a Born-again Christian] about, they are watching. My grandma and I get into conflicts about traditional beliefs compared to Christianity beliefs, and the Native belief is that what your grandparents say is the final word. We are taught not to challenge our grandparents, but as we are growing up in a sort of Modern-Christianity-Traditional world, it somewhat changed, so that if your parents are wrong or sort of like you do not believe you can challenge them on that. So growing up with that kind of mentality, I have gotten into arguments with my grandmother about Christianity as where compared to traditional beliefs...she said that my traditional (Ojibwe) beliefs are wrong and her Christian beliefs are right. And I taught her that what I believe isn't wrong and that everybody believes what they believe; everyone is trying to find their own way to the Creator, everyone is trying to find their own path and you found your path, now let me find my own way is what is comes down to (Ngwess White, Anishinabe/Diné/O'odham).”

On the surface, this may seem negative, but the late teens and twenties are when most people begin to define who they are. This requires some amount of questioning and experimentation with other perspectives beyond their families or community. Nevertheless, many in this cohort do maintain their tribal identity. In this instance, the larger community has an impact on the evolution of tribal and spiritual.

“It was growing up in the community. I did not have that wholeness of being like a “true Indian” type of feeling, I felt conflicted between two worlds. There was something about seeing my Native people, the older role models I looked up to practicing ceremonies or talking about it...I wanted to know more about where my people came from and how we did it (ceremonies) and we practiced it beside Christianity, and that’s what really sparked my interest (Negwes White, Anishinabe/Diné/O’odham, age 20).”

As young adults get closer to their thirties, the conflicts and resolutions in spiritual identity that Negwes spoke of often begin to work themselves out and their perceptions of the sacred change. Many times, it is a life is changing period or experiences such as entering graduate school, having children, beginning a career, or marriage that influences young adult perspectives of the sacred. Many in their late twenties began to find their place in terms of spiritual identity. As they are maturing and taking on greater professional, familial, and community roles, the process of examining their place in the world becomes more apparent. This process relates to the development of a sense of stability and prioritizing where they want to be in their careers and personal life. This cohort is philosophical in their approaches to the sacred. The material trappings of the sacred (ceremony, ritual, and religion in general) are meaningless unless the conceptual framework of the beliefs are understood.

Thus, their questionings of practices and beliefs is not about being insubordinate to elders or family, nor is it a rejection of spiritual beliefs and practices. Instead, it is a way of seeking an understanding about the sacred, and its meaning and relevance in their lives. Understanding the sacred is what opens the door to deeper examinations of tribal identity. Some people begin to find it in their late teens, while others find it through major events in their life. Still others begin to see meaning of the beliefs they have

followed since a young age. Ultimately, the theme of the search is to find a special relationship with self and communal aspects of the sacred and introspection of the self becomes an important mechanism for uncovering the sacred in one's life.

### *31-50 Age Cohort:*

Spirituality provides a place to center and put community members' lives in perspective. This is the theme for this cohort. In many ways it is also being able to re-connect, re-establish, and renew their relationship to the sacred and their tribal identity as a whole. The sacred as a window to view the world and their place in it becomes relevant. This re-connecting with the sacred provides for many a structure to maintain a balance or harmony in their lives. This relationship counters the stresses associated with starting new careers, families, or new educational pursuits. Their life experiences and the influences of family, friends, and their social lives emerge in their choices for spiritual paths.

This cohort includes a range of people who were still searching for a spiritual path (but were now narrowing their choices), while others have found their path and are beginning the steps in learning about a specific tradition. For many, after years of exploring or simply uninterested in religion or spirituality, they returned to the beliefs of their childhood and families. Many of the participants, reflecting on their lives up until this age, believe that they had a better understanding of their families' and/or tribal traditions. There are those that have returned to the sacred beliefs and traditions of their families and tribes. While others maintain their spiritual identities through a less religious



and more conceptual and spiritual point of view. Then there are others whose interactions with other ethnic groups or philosophies have helped them maintain their tribal beliefs.

Mike Marin (Diné/Washoe/ Laguna Pueblo/Mexican) at age thirty-four began to learn the ways of his grandparents and uncles. Growing up in a home that exposed him to Roman Catholicism and traditional Pueblo and Navajo belief systems, Mike decided to follow the path to becoming a medicine man in the Keres Pueblo medicine societies. He noted that this is a long road, but he was willing to learn it. At age 16, his mother told him that there is a tradition of medicine people in their family and that she wanted him to carry on, and at age 34, a Laguna medicine man told him that he needed to carry on his family's sacred traditions and begin his training as a Kiva Chief. This training requires Mike to travel from Chicago to New Mexico to learn from his relatives and other members of the Kiva.

Some community members found themselves reconnecting to the beliefs of their families or tribes in non-traditional ways. As they reached their thirties, some found that religion was not as relevant in their lives as it may have been when they were younger. However, maintaining their tribal identity remains important. Despite being irreligious, they practiced a spiritual path based on values more than a belief in divine transcendence. One participant noted:

“I have never been baptized or practiced a religion at all. I just never really paid too much attention to that. I do not know I just live every day...I try to be a good person, I try to...I do believe in karma, what you put out there will come back. So I just try to do what I think is right (Erin Tubby Hootun, Chahta, age 31).”

This expression of the sacred prioritizes values and ethics over a deity or religion focus and is common within this cohort. It tends to emerge from earlier introspections

about one's purpose and place in the world, coupled with having a variety of experiences with other groups or ways of thinking. The rituals and material aspects of the sacred are less important than the basic fundamentals of being a good person and seeing one's place and interconnections with the world around them. There is sense of exploration and an openness to learn new things and possibilities, achieving a harmony between oneself and others. The sacred exists in everyday experiences and events. This particular belief is active and dynamic, and sustained by a sense of core values and principles, which inevitably leads back to reinforcing core values and ideas associated with tribal belief systems. The following case is a good example of this process.

Andrea Tubby (Chahta, age 35) is an Agnostic and maintains core tribal values through her Agnosticism. She grew up in Chahta Baptist home. Her mother however, was not stringent and allowed Andrea and her sisters to make their own choices regarding spirituality. At a young age, she liked going to mass, reading the bible, and the social nature of the ceremony. However, by age twelve, she became disgruntled with God, because of the hard economic times her family was experiencing, she questioned how God could allow poverty and hard times beset to people who followed his word.

From this experience, she found the sacred in evolution. As she grew older, science and evolution did not answer all of the questions. By her twenties, she found no clear answers about the world and life in either religion or science. She believed that something bigger existed in the universe and there was something more to the mechanics of life, but it is something she cannot put her finger on, or there simply is not proof. Faith and devotion to one idea is not something she sees herself doing. The sacred exists in

being a good person and helping others. Transcending the mundane happens through music, specifically the sacred music of various cultures.

She noted that while she does not believe in a specific deity, sacred music is something that all people have and there is sense of liberation and transcendence that is felt when she hears it. Sacred music is also something that is important in Chahta culture because it maintains the stories, narratives, history, and philosophies of the Chahta people. Spirituality for Andrea helps her maintain a sense of humanity in a bigger sense, and connection to family, tribe, and ancestors.

Allen Turner grew up with traditional Lakota beliefs and Roman Catholicism and describes his spiritual perspective as traditional Lakota with influences from Taoism and Vedic values. Eastern beliefs expanded his view of the world beyond Catholicism and Lakota belief, and for himself, certain ideas emerged that play a role in how he lives his life. He views spiritual traditions as having a piece of something bigger. Through learning about Eastern philosophy, the Lakota concept of *mitakuye oyasin* (we are all related) became very real. This core spiritual value of Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota peoples articulates that all life on the earth is equal and inter-related. Allen saw this in the Vedic and Taoist traditions he studied and the simple connections between cultures found in stories and sacred narratives. This made *mitakuye oyasin* very real and relevant to his life and he gained a better understanding of the concept by seeing it practiced by other ethnic groups. Taoism provided a different perspective to appreciate Lakota beliefs. By looking at other spiritual traditions, his tribal and spiritual identity as a Lakota became stronger.

Community members in their thirties are broad-based in their sense of spirituality and its relationship to tribal identity. Living in an urban center exposes many to other ethnic groups and tribes, which influences how people see themselves and their place in the world. Participants and community members, thirty to forty, are at a place in their lives where understanding who they are and where they came from is important. Their experiences with other tribes, ethnic groups, and communities in the city also play a role in the development of spiritual identity. Kermit Valentino recalled his experiences when he was 30 years old.

“All the sudden I was starting to learn about myself and what it meant to be Indian. It was not really my tribe, but any tribe in general. Some friends of mine were Sioux and I learned some of their stuff and some of their traditions, and some traditions of Chippewa. There were different Indians. After a while, it is an urban Indian thing, you know. As far as I am concerned there is no one dominant tribe in this city and I do not think there ever will be and I do not think there ever should be as far as American Indians go. It should always be (inaudible). I do not think there is any one ceremony that stands out more than any other does. I don’t think there should be because—we’re all put in this spot—we all came to this spot; some of us came voluntarily, some of us were brought here or born here (Kermit Valentino, Oneida, age 50).”

Kermit’s quote describes the development of spirituality and tribal identity for this cohort. The participants (age 30+) all noted that the thirties are when they began seeing the relevance of a spiritual or religious path and the importance of their tribal identities. As they grew older, the paths they chose begin to evolve and they focus on learning and practicing their beliefs.

For many, their forties are a time when the participants continued the cultivation for the spiritual identities. The difference between those in their thirties and forties is that those in their forties have made their choice in terms of spiritual paths and were now developing those paths, looking at family traditions along with the knowledge they have

gained in their younger years. Spiritual beliefs and identity entwine within their life. The following quote provide good examples of where many in this age cohort find themselves:

“Today, I still remember what I learned in the church. I don't say I never go to church because it's not something that I do today for myself, but it's, like, my sisters, you know, a couple of my sisters they went back to certain churches to find some kind of spirituality for themselves, their religion, and they're comfortable with that. When I go to their home or if I go visit them and they want to go to church, I go with them. I do not stop myself from finding any place to pray. However, I do have a strong feeling about connecting with the longhouse and the Oneida people. I don't know a lot yet, but the basic respect and honor and identity, having an—identifying, you know, with the Oneida Nation going through and getting my name, my children, Kermit (her husband), I've gotten several family members to go back there. Just identifying that makes us feel—makes me feel whole and complete. I have been more and more comfortable with that. It helps me to live my day-to-day life better because at least now I can actually identify with something that I could not before (Debra Valentino, Oneida/Menominee, age 47).”

Tribal spiritual traditions greatly influenced the participants in their forties to gain an understanding of their tribal and family traditions. Pamela Silas (Menominee/Oneida, age 49) noted that she did not become interested in the Big Drum until she became older (late 30s/40s), when she able to understand the rules, protocols, and core values of the belief. Living your beliefs on a day-to-day basis is of greater importance. The ceremonies are times to reaffirm one's faith and the teachings associated with the ceremonies are reminders of how one is to live a healthy and harmonious life. Understanding the core values and beliefs of one's tribe allows people to also understand and appreciate the traditions of other tribes.

Pam Silas maintains her Menominee beliefs and also takes care of a pipe bundle given to her by her late friend Antonia Wheeler Sheehy (Blackfeet/Little Shell Chippewa). With the pipe came certain responsibilities, protocols, and beliefs for Pam to

uphold. While the tradition is not Menominee, she maintains the traditions associated with the bundle because she is responsible for its care. She also utilizes eagle feathers in the Ojibwe tradition for prayer and as ritual tools. She learned this from a Blackfoot woman who learned the eagle feather rituals from an Ojibwe woman. As a result, her current spiritual identity has a foundation in traditional Menominee culture, alongside her adoptive traditions learned from close friends.

The late Robert Miller (Ojibwe, age 45) maintained his Catholic identity throughout his life. He described his family not as staunch Catholics, but the Church was a part of their daily life. He attended Catholic school and mass because that was what his family did, and as he noted, “I never really asked why, I just did it...kids today can ask their parents why they do something, but back then, you just followed what your parents said.” His mother was the primary influence over his choice to follow Catholicism as an adult. Like many other Native Catholics, he was less concerned about denominational or religious differences, but more about the community aspect. He saw that community was more important than someone’s religion. The sacred resides in people coming together to pray, eat, joke, and visit and was why he attended St. Augustine’s and ANAWIM. By his forties, Robert had come to a complete understanding of the significance of Catholicism for his family and understood why his parents sent him to church and Catholic school. He also understood the relationship between Catholicism and Ojibwe traditions in the sense of the sacredness of community.

The experiences of Pam, Debra, and Robert are representative of the later end of this cohort. Many have come to a point where they are comfortable and confident in their beliefs. The forties and fifties are a period when participants become religious, in the

sense that they practice and understand the protocols and foundations of their faith. The philosophical aspects combine with the tangible characteristics of their chosen belief system. The result is that the participants practice their beliefs with a deeper understanding of the rituals and ceremonies, along with their purpose and place within a tribal framework. This pattern stretches across belief systems and tribes. The participants' relationship between religion, spirituality, and tribal identity become complete.

#### *51+ Age Cohort:*

Participants in this cohort have reached a point where they are living their beliefs. They have merged the conceptual and material aspects of their beliefs and have integrated them into their daily lives. For many they came full circle, returning to the traditions of their family, youth, and/or tribal identities, but with a stronger sense of relevance within their lives. The religious and spiritual choices they made in their 30s-50s, have become fully incorporated into their daily lives. There is a sense of completion; they have found the relationships between their personal spiritual perspectives and their tribal beliefs and practices. The following two examples speak about the process of returning to a family tradition and the deeper perspectives they have gained from their journey and are representative of a broader pattern within community members in their fifties and early sixties.

Mavis Neconish was born on the Menominee Reservation in Neopit and has spent most of her adult life in Chicago. She noted that when young, she did not see religion as a part of her life, but as she matured, developed a sense of the sacred and its place in her life and identity. Similarly, Mariel Blacksmith (Oglala Lakota) came full circle regarding

her family's tradition. Mariel came from a family of medicine people and the songs associated with the pipe. She had the belief in the pipe since she was young and throughout her life, she has participated in the pipe ways (the traditional beliefs of the Lakota). Mariel has maintained her spiritual beliefs throughout her life and they help her maintain a harmonious life. She noted that the pipe way provides a good model and influence for her children. When she lost her son in 2001, she began to take her family's pipe carrying tradition more seriously. The pipe came to her in a vision. She knew that this was a sign for her to take up the tradition. In her late 40s, she received the pipe from her family and has carried it since. She noted that, "The pipe to me was the greatest gift, I can see and talk to the spirits, and I can talk to people in deeper way." As a pipe carrier, she is someone to whom people turn to for prayers and healing. Part of that healing is bringing balance to people's lives. This is something that is not easy and requires a certain level of discipline and life experience. Mariel noted that one has to be ready to accept this type of responsibility, and when you are, it is the greatest feeling. The world opens up in a new light and the connections between people and the spirits become visible. But you have to have a sense of maturity that only comes with age and experience. The pipe bundle and the responsibilities of carrying it, have given Muriel a more intimate understanding of her family's role as traditional medicine people, Lakota cosmology and identity, and her place within all of it.

These two examples demonstrate where many in this particular cohort find themselves in a spiritual and tribal sense, especially those in their fifties. The experiences and perspectives of Mavis and Mariel were similar to others in their age cohort. In one sense, the participants in their fifties and early sixties have completed a process of



spiritual development and were now able to see the sacred as their parents and grandparents once did. This new perspective and completeness that they have come to opens the door to the next stage of the process. The support and foundation set by family members provides people with a strong spiritual identity connected to tribal identity. As youth, these practices and traditions were not significant to their personal identity, but as participants experienced different beliefs, encountered different people, and made positive life changing decisions, traditional beliefs and family traditions are revealed.

The following quote offers some perspective on this experience.

“When I go to Big Drum, it is a memory of when I was a little girl and I did not know what was going on in front of me. So now, when I go back I am familiar (with the ceremonies) and I am excited because I see the young people taken over. In the last couple of years, I have seen one young man in particular become fluent in his language and whole-heartedly take the reins and become the leader. So when I see that I know that it won’t become lost. Our young people are taking over their role the way they should...I look at books about our Big Drum religion and I look at the pictures of all the people who have passed on. There is a nice memory of those people and it makes my heart feel happy because I met those people. As a little girl and I did not know what any of that was about, and there I was watching and gawking, not absorbing anything. But today when I go back, I really like what I see. For me I touch base with myself and receive many blessings. So that is my reason and interest in going back (to the Big Drum religion). So that is what I do for myself, I go back home and take my daughter with me, and get involved (with ceremonies) and re-familiarize myself with how life was with my mother and father.(Mavis Neconish, Menominee/Pottawatomie, 2006).”

Participants in their mid-sixties continue the process that began in their fifties and have achieved a sense of balance in their lives in terms of spirituality and tribal identity. They are at the end of this process and their perspective on their spirituality have become the sum total of their family’s tradition and their inter-actions with other groups, individuals, and events. Interestingly, many returned to their family’s belief systems in

their forties and fifties, not due to the lack of choices, but instead the more experiences and spiritual options they had, the more they gravitated back to their original spiritual and cultural foundations of their families and tribes. Many noted that as they learned about other people's traditions, they saw similarities to their own cultural traditions. This led many in this cohort to realize that people are the same in their search for the sacred or divine, but each has created their own path. Many in this cohort tended to be very ecumenical in that they maintained their own traditions, but participated in other ceremonies as a way to connect and show respect with other community members and communities outside of Chicago. The late Peggy Desjarlait (Arikara, age 81) liked the Chicago Indian community because she could attend services at St. Augustine's and ANAWIM, but also attend pipe ceremonies and maintain her role as a bundle keeper for her family (Desjarlait, 2006). Many in the community favored the various opportunities to pray with other community members, which is important for this cohort. There is no right or wrong way to view the sacred; all beliefs are different ways of looking at the same thing.

The sacred and tribal aspects of their identity provide the foundation for their interactions with others and how they view and navigate the world around them. What was striking was that this age group emphasized the importance of core values and how you interact and learn from others, verse denominational or other material differences. Those in their fifties, sixties, and older prefer to see the unity amongst people and emphasize harmony in their spiritual and tribal identities. More so, there is also an emphasis on experiencing and learning one's cultural and sacred traditions as a way to understand one's purpose and place in the world. Have a belief, whether a deity and

philosophy, is important because it provides a center point of one's identity as an individual, tribal member, and community member.

Some followed and/or returned to the traditions of their families or tribes, while for others; their spiritual identities have developed into a general spirituality, focusing on personal transcendence and an individualized spirituality. Their beliefs centered on what is important in terms values and understanding of the world and one's place in it. This perspective is similar to those in their thirties that preferred a less religious and more philosophical perspective. However, the difference for those in their sixties and older is that they are more secure in their beliefs and have made them an integral part of their day to day lives. The following two case studies are good examples of this perspective.

Mila Smith (Tulé Inuit, age 69) was born in Greenland and grew up in Copenhagen, Denmark with adopted parents. In 1973 she arrived in Chicago and began to meet other Indians in 1975. Her friends recommended that she visit the American Indian Center and ANAWIM and since then, was an active member in the Chicago community. Mila's spiritual identity developed out of the many beliefs and experiences throughout her life. She had experiences with Lutheranism, Atheism, and Judaism; however, it was her experience working in a Twelve Step Program that she began to think more critically about spirituality and religion. At age thirty-seven, she had found a spiritual place within the Chicago American Indian community. She noted that:

"I guess there has always been something that was spiritual. Let me put it this way, when I started working with Twelve Steps, you find a power greater than yourself and it was a blessing because I did not feel sick any more, there was a power, I do not know who that it, but there is a power... To me Grandfather is everything, love, protection, but he can be mad at you and cause little incidents. He can criticize you, and I have to accept all of these things and you have to try and accept it, and that is something I always try to do (Mila Smith, Tulé Inuit, 2007)."

Mila liked ANAWIM because it was place for Native People to come together and socialize. ANAWIWM was the first time in her life where she could Inuit and be proud of it. Through her experiences with various religious and spiritual beliefs and interactions with other Native Peoples, Mila came to a point when she found that the basic core of all of these belief systems were the same and what was most important was the personal, spiritual connection to a higher power. Mila stated that, “I do not believe in organized religion, even though I go to mass, Lutheran, Catholic, or Jewish...I do not fit in any organized religion, but I have these moments when I sit at home and they are precious (Mila Smith, Tulé Inuit, 2007).” Attending mass or temple was a way to interact with fellow community members, her family, and represented the social side of the sacred. However, her interaction with the divine occurred at home while knitting.

Mila noted that when she knitted, there is a peacefulness that comes over her and it is the time when she can transcend the mundane and speak to Grandfather. When she knits her two cats would stop playing and sit by her. When she concludes her knitting for the evening, the cats will run off and play. In that moment of time, Mila was at perfect peace with the world around her. These moments were far more sacred than any mass or ceremony. The everyday act of knitting becomes a ritual and ceremony to interact with the divine. This is the path Mila found and enjoyed. A contemporary who came from a different background and upbringing shares a similar view of the sacred and divine.

Robert Wapahi (Isányathi [Santee Dakota]), age 61) has lived in the Chicago Indian community for sixteen years. His home community in Knife River, Nebraska was predominantly Episcopalian and attended services until age six. Through his life, he went to Catholic and Lutheran schools, but never really felt connected to or had any interest in

the dominant beliefs of his community. He never had much interest in religion and saw the sacred differently than his family. He recognizes and respects the Great Spirit as a mystery, something that is part of the fabric of the universe. However, he does not associate it with a face or any other material aspect, because it would take away from the concept of an entity that permeates the universe. At a young age, he maintained a core belief that there were options and choices for people to make about their life and spiritual identities. His uncle Wapaha was the only member of Robert's family that took him to sweats and ceremonies, and taught him about traditional beliefs and instilled a strong sense of Lakota identity in Robert through supporting his spiritual perspective. Robert summed up his beliefs in the following statement:

“So there has never been an idea of practicing them because I don't know how you would practice (a belief) that is not regimented. We (Lakota) are always taught beliefs are not regimented. You can either believe them or you will not, there is no you are going to be this or this is going to happen to you. There are no different levels of religion (religiosity); you either believed in something or you didn't. That was good enough for me because I wasn't planning on being a religious person (Robert Wapahi, Isányathi [Santee Dakota], 2006).”

This pragmatic perspective was common in the interviews with other community members in this cohort. Security and confidence in one's beliefs and tribal identity are two key themes within this age cohort. For many, when they looked back at what they have done, where they have been, and the knowledge and experience they have acquired, their views of the sacred tend to become more universal. Of note is that many in this, and the previous cohort, recalled an influential adult from the youth, be it there parent, uncle, aunt, or community member. In some ways, the advice and knowledge they received set their sense of the sacred, which in turn cultivated their sense of tribal identity. Within this cohort, there tends to be an acceptance of a greater force beyond human comprehension.

In terms of tribal and self identity, they maintain a confidence in their beliefs and tribal identities. This cohort in particular stresses the importance of unity and had a particular irritation with identity politics (who is more Indian than who) and religious segregation. In their lifetime, they have come to find that one's time on the earth is short and precious. As one elder said, "God is God, it does not make a difference who you pray to; all prayers go to the same place." Participants in this cohort are secure in their tribal identities because they understand what that actually means. Through their spiritual development, coupled with their interactions with other tribal and ethnic groups, questions about what it means to be of a particular tribe. Spirituality and religion for this cohort stems from strong familial and community bonds and interactions, and a strong personal connection to a higher power. Simultaneously, a strong spiritual belief provides the conceptual and philosophical grounding that supports their strong sense of tribal and Native identity.

### **Discussion:**

By observing how spiritual identity develops over time, it is possible to see a multi-faceted process that works on various levels of identity. Spiritual identity develops alongside individual, tribal, familial, and communal identities. When examining personal perspectives of spirituality and tribal/Native identity over a lifetime, certain patterns are illuminated that may be taken for granted. One example is the common perspective by adults and seniors that youth do not care about spirituality or maintaining their tribal identities. This perception based often on how youth dress or a lack of interest in cultural activities. However as participants looked back at their youth, there came a realization

that they did not have the same interest in spirituality or religion or culture as they now have at an older age. Within the interviews was that each cohort simply views the same things differently due to where they are at in life. Despite this however, everyone from all age cohorts seemed to follow the same process of awareness or non-interest; being curious and exploratory; philosophical; finding a path that works and the development of that path; fully integrating the philosophical and material aspects; and ending with a universal sense of a sacred order in life.

In terms of how adults and seniors saw young adults and how young adults saw themselves, an interesting pattern emerged. Many seniors, elders, and older adults in the community noted on several occasions that they believed young people were not very spiritual or interested in their tribal cultures. Adults who maintain this perspective can give the appearance of hopelessness for youth and tribal culture and identity, but this may have more to do a concern that youth and young adults do forget who they are and that they have traditions that they can turn to. This may be a worried point of view born from personal experience.

A good example involved a community elder who saw how the younger members of her family were apprehensive when it came to taking care of the sacred bundle her family held and maintained. She feared that the family bundle was going to be lost because there was a hesitation from the younger family members. But in the light of how many of the participants noted how they felt as young adults, many young adults do not feel ready for the responsibility of taking care of sacred objects. As noted by a few participants in their fifties and sixties, one has to be ready for it. This concern from adults and seniors may stem from something they remember from their own experiences. Many

adults and seniors in the community may see youth and young adults taking similar paths (for better or worse) as they did when they were that age. Therefore, their concerns act as a warning to younger community members to keep focused on and to develop it in a good way, their spiritual and tribal identity.

However, this was something also echoed within the concerns of community youth, as one young adult noted that youth should not give up and not be afraid to learn their traditions. Many seniors are happy that many youth in the community are not just learning their languages and traditions, but living them. Shannon Cobe (Ojibwe) noted that she did not understand why people would ask her questions regarding sacred and cultural traditions, because she saw many youth and young adults in the community as being more fluent in their traditions. Her observation is well noted. During this research, there were a large number of youth, teens, and young adults who attend ceremonies and are active in learning their tribal language(s) and tradition(s). One participant shared her experiences while attending Oneida Long House ceremonies. She attended because she was curious about the Long House Religion and wanted to know more about her Oneida heritage. However not knowing the Oneida language made the things difficult at first, a family member helped with the translation. Despite the language barrier, she learned as much as she could and noted that:

“...yeah, it made me feel a little bad, left out, but it did motivate me to learn, because I believe that language is a part of culture and it is important for others to learn their language too. But I am also half Argentine, so I have to learn Spanish, Menominee, and Oneida, and then [smiles] do English. So it is very hard and I am taking one at a time. I am learning Spanish, I have some cassette tapes for Menominee, and at least a few important words would be a good start (Jasmine Alfonso, Menominee/Oneida/Argentine, age 21).”



The sentiment and experience within this quote are common among many young adults and teens when they are first learning about their tribe's traditions. Nonetheless, when given the opportunities to learn their traditions, young adults (along with youth and teens) are eager to learn. One study (conducted in 2009) found that many teens and young adults wanted to participate in the tribal ceremonies and learn their traditions and languages more so than older generations (West et al, 2010). While many youth and young adults are interested in learning and maintaining their culture and Native/tribal identity, it is up to the adults and elders in their families and community members to pass on traditions and perspectives of culture and the sacred. Sharing life experience with younger community members provides the place where lessons are learned and information absorbed. It is common to see elders and adults in the community performing rituals or ceremonies explaining to those in attendance, regardless of age, insuring that people understand the purpose of the act. The stories and experiences of community elders and adults transmit knowledge, life lessons, and values through traditional stories and creation narratives.

Life experiences shaped the meanings and conceptions of their spiritual and tribal identities. This process allows each generation to make symbolic markers that they can return to for guidance when faced with a life changing decision or during a time of transition. Subsequently, these signifiers of experience or revelation become shared with others who are encountering a similar situation. This process is repetitive with every generation going through the same issues of identity and coming to similar perspectives as the previous generation. For the participants of this research, spiritual and tribal identity was not innate, but something that is cultivated and developed through life. More

importantly, it is the choices people make as to whether traditions are maintained or not. And for those who choose a more introspective or spiritual path, they return to the basic tenets of their tribal belief systems and find a universal link to other belief systems.

### **Summary:**

The participant interviews and survey responses revealed a deep, spirituality that provides a source of strength, inspiration, and foundation for values in the lives of individuals, families, and community. In terms of tribal identity, spirituality provides a tie where the various layers of identity connect. For many of the participants, their spiritual perspectives are what connected them to their tribal identities and how they define themselves. On a community level, spiritual and religious events and ceremonies act as mechanisms to connect individuals and families from various tribal backgrounds and belief systems and create social bonds that build community substructures.

Religiosity among the participants and within the community is influenced by age and life experience. Expressed in terms of relevance and understanding, religiosity is present in all ages and stages of life as individuals learned and experienced the spiritual practices of other community members, ethnic groups, or family members. A pattern and process emerged from the interview data that illuminated a development in spiritual identity from youth to old age.

Examining this pattern among the participants revealed that the development of sacred identity (and subsequently ethnic identity) was not as much a linear process as it was dynamic. If you think of each age cohort in this study as complete rotation on a spiral, you would notice that the ends do not meet, but instead stand parallel to each

other. In one respect, the line is back where it started, yet there is a distance from its starting point. The development of spiritual identity is similar to this analogy. Peoples' first exposure of the sacred begins with their families and communities through religious or tangible practices (ceremony and ritual). Important within this stage were the interactions individuals had with their families and others. Of note, the participants who grew up in homes where there was very little to no religious practices, learned about religion through their peers or other community members. There existed an inquisitiveness to see what other people do. This curiosity about the religious practices of others opened the door to the sacred for many at a young age. What this indicates is that if the family does not promote a religious identity, then peer and community networks and relationships assume this role. The idea of being part of a community develops in the ritual interactions of family or peers. From this, the physical world of the sacred becomes visible, but it is not complete, as the meanings of these beliefs and practices exist on a surface level. The process of understanding the sacred takes up a large part of one's life, as it goes through periods of self-examination and indifference. At some point, through their experiences with the secular and sacred in their day-to-day lives, the participants chose a direction based on its relevance to their life. For some it was a return to the beliefs of their families, for others a renewed interest in their tribal traditions, and others took a more philosophical path. The participants began to see the relationship between the physical and abstract aspects of the sacred. People examine and develop a deeper understanding of this relationship, and as the participants grow older until the two aspects of the sacred become seamless.

As the participants developed their spiritual identities, they simultaneously developed their tribal identities. For those who returned to family or tribal spiritual traditions, they began to understand the other aspects of their tribal identity. The participants found the sacred aspects to be the conceptual foundations of their tribal identity. Many of the ceremonies and sacred narratives outlined core values and behaviors that defined the uniqueness of their particular tribe(s). Both components of tribal identity, sacred and secular, were accessible to the participants in some form, whether it was through family, community, or peers. However, at a young age, many of the participants did not make the connection between the two. Through their interactions with other ethnic groups, communities, living situations, lifestyle choices, self-reflection, and exposure to different ways of thinking, the participants were eventually able to bridge the two aspects of their identity as they reached their forties and fifties. By the senior years, the sacred and secular aspects of identity become one in the same. People live their beliefs to the point where the line between the sacred and secular are blurred and reach a point of balance and harmony between who they are spiritually, culturally, and socially. In some ways, the spiritual continuum is complete, as people in their later years people return to where they started as youth, where they participate in the sacred and secular traditions of their tribes and families. Much of the ceremonial life within the community occurs in intimate family or individual settings. This creates social bonds within families and connections to other families who participate in the same ceremonies. This network can exist solely in the city or span across the country.

Spirituality and religiosity are dynamic forces in the lives of the participants and many community members. One does not learn spirituality or religion in black and white

terms, but in fact learns as they experience life. People make choices about what and why they believe what they do, and the meanings behind their tribe's cosmology or worldview. These choices are part of the evolution of their spiritual identity, as the individual grows older and learn from their own and the tribe or communities experiences. Spirituality in a sense becomes the totality of one's existence and their interactions with the world around them.

Yet, during this dynamic, ongoing process, the core tribal beliefs and concepts reveal themselves through life experiences, observation, and contemplation. Cosmology begins to manifest itself in physical ways. Tribal cosmology and values become real and tangible, whether it is how one conducts themselves in public, the learning and speaking of their language, participation in community activities, or what knowledge they acquire and pass on to other individuals and their community, and ultimately subsequent generations. Thus, the tangible expressions of spirituality manifest in various ways according to one's relation to social contexts (family, community, neighborhood, peers, and employment), physical spaces (city, rural, secluded forest, public park, home or community center), and their age. The age factor is significant in this research, which should not be surprising, as age often influences one's perspective. For the senior participants, their life stories looked back at their lives and the choices they made that influenced the evolution of their spiritual identities. Unique to this research was the relationship between the life narratives of the seniors to the preceding age cohorts. Experiences of the seniors spoke from the past and existed within the current narratives of younger age cohorts, most notably, the eighteen to thirty and the thirty-one to fifty cohorts.

What emerged from the narratives was that regardless of the age cohort, all of the participants went through (or are currently going through) similar developmental stages in regards to their spiritual identity. Key to this was the common thread of either maintaining or returning to the beliefs of their families. This recalls Barth's standpoint of family and religion as the core foundation to ethnic identity. However, family also plays an important role within tribal and spiritual identities. For many of the participants (both interview and surveys), family was the nexus for the learning and preservation of tribal and spiritual identities. For those who did not come from religious homes or families that did not practice tribal traditions, the participants found a family in community organizations and peer networks.

Within the larger context of the community, spiritual and tribal identities of individuals develop further through various social networks. Interactions with members of the same tribe and other tribes in the community provided an opportunity for many to get exposure to the traditions of other tribes and community members. This interaction influenced many participants in terms of exploring spiritual or cultural traditions. For many it was through their peer networks that they attended their first sweat lodge, mass, or other ceremonies. For the community, ceremonies like funerals, drum feasts (the feeding of a big drum/powwow drum), sunrise ceremonies, expose many to the traditions and beliefs of fellow community members. This understanding and respect for the various tribal traditions is a powerful feature of the Chicago American Indian community. This was something many participants noted as being important because as you respect and understand the beliefs of others, you understand your own. Learning or seeing the traditions of others in public ceremonies often encouraged participants to

reflect on their own tribe's tradition or ask family members or other tribal members about spiritual practices.

Spiritual traditions, or journeys, affect one's perception of tribal identity. Namely, they help define core tribal values and cultural substructures that provide the substance and reasoning behind material expressions of tribal and Native identity. Through examining inter-generational perspectives and experiences, it becomes evident that the sacred aspects of identity affect and support the secular characteristics of self. In the end, tribal identity cannot exist without substance or meaning, and the sacred/spiritual facets of ethnic identity provide that meaning and understanding.

## **CONCLUSION:**

As the research concluded, the diversity that exists within the Chicago American Indian community became visible in terms of religiosity and the role of sacred identity in the development tribal and individual identity. Although the research did not go into specific details about each tribe or belief system within the community, what emerged was a record of the various spiritual and religious expressions that exist within the community, the nature of spirituality and religiosity and how it relates to tribal identity. Examining the sacred on the community and individual levels made it possible to observe how spiritual identity develops over time and how a community of diverse tribal members and traditions share and learn from each other. These social and cultural interactions between community members or families play an important role in maintaining tribal identity.

The community, along with being diverse tribally, maintains a wide breadth of religious and spiritual diversity that includes traditional, syncretic, Christian, and Eastern belief systems. To some degree, this is not unusual as urban Indians encounter a large array of belief systems urban Indians encounter simply by living in a multi-ethnic and religious city. Nevertheless, many retain their traditional beliefs. The research found that families and family networks (within and outside of Chicago) are key components in the maintenance of traditional and other belief systems. Family plays a major role in the development and preservation of Native identity and spirituality and maintains a bond between community members of different tribes, belief systems, and families. This in many ways contributed to the notion among community members that religion and



spirituality is unseen or out of public view. Not that it was non-existent, but that people within the community practice and keep their beliefs close to themselves and within their respective families. Sacred beliefs, for many, provide a foundation from which their tribal and overall Native identity is defined and maintained. It also provides a sanctuary for reflection and mediation during times of stress and/or flux. The family keeps and maintains these core values, and can act as the nexus of adaptation for these values. This is especially true for community members who maintain traditional beliefs and practices.

Traditional beliefs (and on a deeper level, clan) identity is an essential part of tribal identity. Tribal identity functions as the foundation or anchor that linked the participants to their families and their spiritual traditions. Spiritual identity plays a more significant role in the development of tribal identity as it provides meaning, conceptualization, and core values that defines the larger group identity. It operates as the body and sacred identity is the substance.

The sacred aspects of tribal identity provide the philosophical and theoretical explanations of the material aspects and expressions such as ceremonies, social institutions, behavior, and methods of passing on knowledge. This research in many ways opened a window into the mechanics of sacred identity, revealing that sacred/sacralized identity contains a system of narratives concerning the origin of the group's tribal and ethnic identity and core morals and values that remind the group why they exist. Members of the Chicago American Indian community, regardless of tribe or spiritual tradition, do what they can to maintain and pass on the core values and beliefs of their particular tribe. Despite living in an urban area for one or more generations, core tribal values have been, and are still, maintained and remain consistent through time. Most

importantly, tribal core values persist as community members practice the ceremonies and rituals that reinforce these values. The persistence of spirituality and the practice of religious ceremonies and observances ensures that tribal and family based traditions endure, connecting past, present, and future generations.

On a community wide level, sacred identity maintains connects tribal beliefs and practices, family traditions and the beliefs of other community members. These bonds and interactions build the substance of the community in terms of respect for other traditions and a network of support (both socially and culturally). The latter is of great significance because it is the mutual aide and support of community members that provides a space or situation in which people can practice their beliefs and maintain their tribal traditions in an open and safe context.

From a theoretical perspective, the research conducted within the Chicago American Indian community reflects similar studies among other ethnic groups and ethnic enclaves in urban areas. What was unique to this research was that unlike previous studies which focused on a single ethnic group (Italians, Cubans, Hausa, Pathans, etc...) that share a common culture and language, the American Indian community of Chicago is an ethnic enclave made up of several distinct tribes and languages. The experiences of the Chicago American Indian community in terms of maintaining tribal identity in a multi-tribal community resembles the urban tribal communities of Ndola, in the African Copper Belt (Northern Zambia and Zimbabwe).

Ndola contained various tribal groups who moved into urban areas for job opportunities and through government programs. Despite governmental pressures to assimilate and become de-tribalize, they maintained their distinct tribal identities within

the mix of people, but also created a larger urban African identity in contrast to the dominant British authorities and culture. For urban Indians in Chicago, tribal identities were, and still are, maintained as way to remain unique among other ethnic groups and most importantly a sense of connectedness to family, ancestors, history, and a deep connection to place (ancestral and within Chicago). Maintaining tribal identity allowed many to find support among fellow tribal members (both in the city and on the reservation) as they came to Chicago. On a larger community scale, there also developed a communal Native or urban Indian identity in terms of asserting civil rights, housing, economic, health, and educational support and services. Scholars of the 1960s and 1970s viewed this as the growth of Pan-Indianism, in which tribal identities would fade into a nationalistic Indian identity and politic.

Within the Chicago American Indian community however, this kind of Pan-Indianism never really existed, either past or present. Instead tribalism continued and a distinct urban Indian identity emerged. This was a response to multiple tribes living side-by-side as a larger Native community with shared political and economic experience, with people maintaining their tribal identities on the personal and family levels. The idea of Pan-Indianism arises out of a political sense of ethnic pluralism and a nation building ethos, as promoted by the U.S. Government.

The purpose of the Relocation Program was to erode the sense and concept of tribal identity and push Native Peoples into a larger American national identity. However, like the urbanization programs of the British in the Copper Belt, these types of programs did not erode tribal identity, but instead made it stronger. This original idea of Pan-Indianism needs re-conceptualization to reflect a more lived experience rather than a

socio-political expectation. Within the community today is a sense of joint-communal effort to support each other in good and bad times. For example, in 2010 as both the ANAWIM Center (Kateri Center of Chicago) and the American Indian Center faced some organizational challenges, the community responded and supported the organizations through a tough time. In a sacred sense, community members from diverse tribal backgrounds and spiritual traditions still gather to greet the new sun on the solstices and equinoxes. Some members of the Women's Solstice group and other community members have begun to join members of the Mexika and Mayan communities during their Sunrise ceremonies to show support and strengthen bonds between distinct tribal communities.

Most important, public ceremonies will ultimately have inter-tribal participation, but this should not be confused or perceived as one tribal group losing or giving up their traditional beliefs for a Pan-Indian or tribal identity. These events produce and reaffirm a larger community-wide Native identity. Members of the Chicago American Indian community will come together for public ceremonies that commonly shared among many tribes. The participants find a common ground regarding the protocols and rituals of the ceremony under the auspices of "for the good of the community," reaffirming unity and common bonds with the larger community. When the ceremony concludes, people return to the unseen world of family, clan, and tribal specific beliefs and practices. Public, inter-tribal ceremonies unite the community as Native Peoples and simultaneously reinforce individual family and tribal traditions, illustrating the uniqueness of each tradition.

In terms of tradition, support emerges within the interactions of adults and seniors who share their tribes' cultural knowledge or values with younger community members.

These interactions educate youth about the traditions of other community members or their own, inspiring them to learn about their tribe's and family's traditions and beliefs. Ultimately, all of these interactions contribute to the maintenance of tribal and family identity and allow these very traditions to inform and shape the larger sense of urban Indian community identity.

As Barth and other Transactionalist scholars and researchers have found, groups tend to strengthen their sense of ethnic identity in light of external pressures and interactions with other ethnic groups, people find ways to maintain a sense of order to mitigate the flux. Tribal identity helped (and helps) maintain a sense of order and place on the family level, but also helps build relations with other tribal groups within the larger community, especially in terms of the sacred. The sacred aspects of tribal, family, and individual identity provide a strong foundation for many and maintains their perspective on who they are and their interactions with other groups and people in Chicago.

Mol's theory of Sacralized Identity presents the idea that religion and spirituality are phenomena that reside within the greater context of identity. This became evident within the life stories and perspectives gathered from the personal interviews. This research found spiritual identity based on where an individual or group exists or sees themselves in the grander scheme of life and the universe. More importantly, the sacred aspects of tribal ethnic identity provided the participants with a core set of values that guided their perspectives of the world and their interactions with other tribal members, community members, and other ethnic groups and communities. In this sense, the research also supported the theories of Barth, where religion and family provide the core

foundation of ethnic identity. Sacred identity in the Chicago American Indian community exists on multiple levels that interact with each other at certain points. Despite the various tribal backgrounds and spiritual traditions of community members, individual, family, and tribal sacred identity provides the base from which people can center themselves and/or find direction in a time a crisis or finding relevance in their tribe's spiritual traditions and philosophies. Spirituality becomes the conceptual center of individual, tribal, and community identities and religion becomes its material expression.

The sacred aspect of identity develops over time and evolves through life experiences. This process begins with a foundation in the family and groups core values and beliefs, but needs time to mature and, in a sense, become tested over time. What emerged from this research was that core values may provide the foundation for ethnic/tribal identity, but external experiences support their meaning and conceptualization. If an ethnic group's core values and beliefs are the theory in which they operate, then life experiences and interactions with other groups is where they are tested. This in turn allows space for innovations. A common theme that emerged within the interviews and conversations with community members was insuring that core beliefs and values remain relevant to the times in which people are living, essential asking the question; "what does it mean to be from this tribe or tradition?" Every generation faces new challenges and issue that can affect perceptions of self and group identity. A group's core values and beliefs hold more than simply what you are and believe, but why you believe what you do. The latter is what is found within the interactions with other groups and their potential or actual loses can move a group to turn to these values and re-evaluate them in the current social/political/ecological context. These external

interactions and experiences, on the group, family, and individual levels will ultimately reinforce the core or facilitate adaptations. In many of these cases, the sacred aspect of tribal/ethnic identity that acts (in cognitive terms) as the adaptive mechanism. A good example of this was the various tribe specific clubs that existed during the early years of the American Indian Center and the Relocation period. These clubs provided a support network for tribal members and to insure that tribal language and culture survived in Chicago. They provided a safe place where tribal members entering Chicago could get their bearings and situate themselves within the community. More importantly, the tribal clubs afforded people a sense of belonging in a new city. While community organizations within the community have taken over this function today, community members (both established and newly arrived) still look to other tribal members for support through ceremonial institutions, familial ties, and social networks within and outside of Chicago. Even though these networks and institutions are predominantly unseen; they still exist and function as the more visible tribal clubs of four to five decades ago once did.

The sacred in terms of spirituality is something truly owned by the individual and religion becomes the domain of the group (and subsequently the family). The sacred is the vessel that holds the core foundations and history of the group as maintained through spirituality, ritual/ceremonial practices, or simply through a core philosophy and worldview. The sacred is what matters most to the group, whatever that may be. To this, the community becomes a larger reflection of the specific group nodes of tribe and family. Many who attend Native American Church meetings, pipe ceremonies, funerals and feasts, Christian services, or public ceremonies come from different tribal backgrounds yet maintain a similar spiritual or religious perspective.

The beliefs and core values within these multi-tribal or public ceremonial institutions often have similarities to the participant's own tribal beliefs and cultural values, which contributes to why community members participate in these practices. Never the less, people inevitably maintain their tribal traditions and perspectives when they practice their beliefs within a larger community context. Community ritual participation allows people to practice and maintain their core beliefs and traditions, while simultaneously creating bonds and reestablishing relationships with other community members. Community level ceremonial contexts provide a nexus for the unseen aspects of the sacred (individual, family, and tribal) to comingle with other traditions and beliefs, namely that of unity and family. It is common core values that cross tribal/family/individual boundaries and lay the building blocks of a community group identity based on place and communal experience. Thus, the community level identity within the Chicago American Indian community is not as much a Pan-Indian identity as an urban Indian identity. An urban Indian identity connects people from diverse tribal backgrounds socially, economically, and politically, but allows each tribal and family group to maintain its own unique identity.

*The Sacred and Nature of Spiritual Identity:*

Tribal and sacred identities are prevailing and ever-present within the Chicago American Indian community, but their expression can often be subtle and can vary depending on age and experience. Spiritual identity within the community exists between a seen and unseen boundary. The participants of this research noted that spirituality and religious identity are personal or shared only amongst a small group. Spirituality and



religion are very personal standards and represent a core foundation of identity for many. There are instances where it becomes visible in the public eye in obvious ways as in church services, funerals, and invocations before public events. Outside of these public displays however, religion and spirituality appear in daily activities such as a prayer before staff meetings at many of the Indian community organizations, a family sweat lodge in some one's back yard, or ghost feasts performed and only viewed by members of the deceased's family and close friends. The significance of the ceremonies and rituals, both private and public, is that they renew, reaffirm, and reconnect people to their tribal, familial, and community identities and reminds them of their ritual and social obligations to other members of their tribes, clans, and community.

Expressions of tribal cosmology, belief, and practices within the Chicago American Indian community materialize in various ways. These expressions are not only visible on a public level, but it often exists on multiple levels. These levels range from individual, family, clan, tribe, and community. Religiosity and spirituality is not something that exists within public view. The reasons for this can vary, as people are often motivated differently, but the most common reason that was that religion and spirituality is personal and not to be shared randomly. This personal or exclusive perspective ties individuals, their family, clans, and/or tribes together as a unique ethnic group.

Spirituality in the Chicago community is not a separate phenomenon, but is an integral part of peoples' life. That idea of cosmology discussed in the introduction, manifests itself in the daily lives of community members. Religion and spirituality in the community is an active and dynamic system of relationships between and within various

individuals, families, tribes, and landscapes. Groups may practice their beliefs in isolation or in a public context. Often these various groups' fission and fuse depending on the social situation or event. In addition, this process of fission and fusion occurs within the same groups. On the tribal level, spirituality can be diverse in its social applications, practices, and beliefs. The sacred aspect of tribal identity can house a variety of complimentary and antagonistic beliefs and practices, and often, members of the same tribe to belong to different religious traditions. These beliefs and practices diversify themselves further through family and clan level variations. Religion and spirituality is a complex aspect of identity and most importantly contains both permanent and fluid characteristics. Cosmology, as a guiding philosophy, provides the basis for both the sacred and secular aspects of identity. Within the Chicago Indian community, this foundation of both family and spirituality are the two that many vigorously fight to maintain. These core tribal paradigms keep people connected to their tribe, families, and to the larger Native community in Chicago and their home reservations and communities.

The participants and community have maintained their traditions, regardless of living in Chicago. Change and adaption are an inevitable part of life, and while some aspects of tribal traditions are affected, many participants and community members simply utilized family and tribal networks to get the resources they needed. Nevertheless, spirituality exists within people regardless of where they live. Community members carry their beliefs and traditions within their hearts and minds. They practice them and pass them onto the next generation, with the adaptations needed in order to conduct them properly. One participant noted that:

“Things cannot help but change and adapt, that's how they stay alive...As far as living in Chicago having an effect on me, I would say no, because I already had

my beliefs when I came here. Living in Chicago has no affect in what I believe (Robert Wapahi, 2007)

Any adaptations to sacred practices tend to be cosmetic, as the core beliefs and values stay the same. Ultimately, these core beliefs and values are important. They are the unmoving foundations of spiritual and tribal identity. The following, and final quote encapsulates the experience of sacred and tribal identity within the community, and speaks to the experience of maintaining sacred traditions in an urban Indian community. The quote came from an email flyer regarding the 2010 Spring Equinox Sunrise ceremony at Foster Beach.

*“The Spring Equinox is almost here. The rain is here and the ground is beginning to thaw. So, how do we come together at this time throughout the community? Alone, I do not have an answer but maybe with your help we will figure it out. Prayers are heard from all walks of life and no matter where we are they can be heard. Today I ask Shukwaya’tisu (Oneida =Creator) to help us hear each other, love each other, respect each other, help us find the words to speak good to each other. I feel like I am coming from a time of healing and forgiveness into a new season of rising hope. Can only speak for myself here but it has been a bit of a struggle to see out of a clear window. The window is getting clearer and I am looking forward to new ideas with action, planting newness and nurturing it and watching it grow. How are you? What are you looking forward to, how can we work toward this together for family, our communities, our future. I pray daily, but I am going to change my daily ritual of how I do this. I do things daily but I am going to really try and change the way I handle and do these things. How does that go, “If you continue to do the same things, you will continue to get the same results”, something like that. So yes, change is good. I look forward to a renewed balance, just like the equinox, that balance between night and day. Seasons do not stand still, each day within a season, I wonder what gift I will receive today that sheds all negativity and transforms my spirit with positive energy (Debra Valentino, Oneida/Menominee, 2010).”*

This ceremony and quote captures the sacred experience in the Chicago American Indian community, because it demonstrates the maintenance of tradition and adaptability of such traditions. This ceremony also becomes a metaphor for Native peoples maintaining their

connections and sense of relatedness to their families, clans, tribes, other Native People, and the sacred, social, and cultural landscapes that they call home. Moreover, it is this sense of relatedness and community spirit that maintained sacred identity and allowed many to maintain their family and tribal traditions. This supported, and still helps community members adapt to life in a multi-ethnic city and multi-tribal community. The sacred aspects of identity are the mechanisms and places that a person or group can go to when they need to put their life in perspective and find the answers to current issues or pressures through the examination of their life experiences. In terms of identity, the sacred is the moment and the place where one can stop, assess their situation, and make informed and conscious choices and decisions.

*In Closing:*

While in many ways preliminary, this research illustrated some of the main nodes, experiences, and practices of the sacred within the Chicago American Indian. It also demonstrated how people develop and maintain their sense of the sacred. However, it was not possible to explore other aspects of the sacred and its relationship to the maintenance of tribal identity within the scope of this research, namely specific tribal traditions, a deeper history of the community's sacred identity, and further study of the development of spiritual and tribal identity.

Within the research, there emerged some common traditional beliefs/ religions amongst community members. Belief systems such as the Midéwiwin, Big Drum, and the Native American Church are common in the community. There should be further

research to understand how these beliefs affect the lives of individual members, how they build community and their relationship to tribal identities.

When conducting the ethnohistoric research for this study, it became apparent that there was very little recorded about religious and spiritual events and ceremonies in the community's history. Further examination is required to find new sources of information and conduct interviews to build a more detailed ethnohistory of sacred identity and the maintenance of tribal identity within the Chicago American Indian community.

Another aspect of this research examined an emergent pattern of the spiritual, or sacred, identity developing over time. From a cognitive perspective, this pattern created new questions as how ethnic and sacred identity exists, sustains itself, and evolves through time and what are the indicators of sustainability or decline, on the group, family, and individual levels. This aspect of the research has potential regarding research focusing on the development of individual ethnic and spiritual identities within the Chicago American Indian and other urban ethnic communities/enclaves, utilizing life narratives of their experiences and tracking the evolution of ethnic identity. Simultaneous, the question as to the contribution of individuals in the maintenance and innovation of group identity also emerged from this research.

Identity maintenance and the sacred in urban Indian communities are important topics when examining political policies and historical processes that affect Native Peoples. They inform the manner people adapt to these pressures and the strategies that are employed to maintain the uniqueness of tribal and sacred identity. Ultimately, this research reveals these questions and illustrates the dynamic nature of urban Indian

communities and the subtleties that hold communities, families, and tribal groups together.

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## **APPENDIX I**

### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

## **Participant Information and Consent Form**

**Title:** The Seen and Unseen: Religion and Identity in the Chicago American Indian Community

**Project Director:** Eli S. Suzukovich III  
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**Dissertation Chair:** Dr. Richard Sattler

### **Project Abstract:**

This doctoral dissertation is an ethnographic community study of religion and its relationship to ethnic/cultural identity in the Chicago American Indian community. The goals of this research are to: 1) examine the current ceremonial practices and spiritual beliefs and how they are employed in the community; 2) how community organizations assist and participate in the preservation and continuing development and modification of the religious and spiritual traditions of the Chicago American Indian community; and 3) how, or if, tribal beliefs are adapted to fit an urban lifestyle. This dissertation will produce an account of religious views and beliefs in the Chicago American Indian community through the examination current religious beliefs and practices and their relationships to the maintenance of tribal identity in a multi-tribal community. Most important, this study will produce an account of American Indian concepts of spirituality and ceremonialism of an urban Indian community from the community's perspective. A copy of the finished document will be given to the American Indian Center of Chicago (AIC) and the ANAWIM Center for their records and use.

### **Purpose of the Interviews:**

The goal of the questions is to ascertain: 1) how the current community defines the religious and spiritual heritage of the Chicago American Indian community as a whole; 2) and what the community members feel are important aspects and events of their own individual, family, and/or tribal cosmological, spiritual, and ceremonial beliefs and practices.

**Procedures:** If you choose to participate in this project, you will be asked to answer questions regarding your views or thoughts about what it means to be healthy or ill. The length of time for the interview session is flexible and will be based on the amount of time you feel you may need. The interview session can take place at a location of your choice. The interviews will be recorded on cassette tape, written on a note pad, or recorded in a manner that you would find more comfortable. The interviews will be recorded only to insure accuracy of the notes.

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:** Your decision to take part in this study is entirely and completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time. If you decide to withdraw, all materials that contain your information will be destroyed in your presence. There will be no negative outcomes or liabilities for withdrawing or refusing to participate in this research.

**Benefits of the research:**

This dissertation will produce an account of American Indian ceremonialism and belief in the Chicago area through the examination current spiritual beliefs and practices and their relationships to previous, older observances, institutions, and traditions, and the social and natural landscapes of the Chicago region. Most important, this study will produce an account of American Indian concepts of spirituality and ceremonialism of an urban Indian community from a community perspective. While this research may benefit the community as a whole, there may be no direct benefits to the individual. A copy of the finished document will be given to the AIC and the ANAWIM Center for their records and use.

**Risks and Discomforts:**

These interviews are concerned with views on religion and spirituality; as a result there are no clear risks with this project. Mild discomfort may result from shyness, a dislike of being recorded onto tape, or a mistrust of the interviewer. There will be no negative outcomes or liabilities for participating in this project. Your participation is completely voluntary.

**Liability Statement:**

Although we believe that the risk of taking part in this study is minimal, the following liability statement is required in all University of Montana consent forms.

In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's Claims representative or University Legal Counsel. ≡ (Reviewed by University Legal Counsel, July 6, 1993)

**Confidentiality:** The information from this interview will be used in a doctoral dissertation that will be printed and available for the public record. Your name will not be used in the dissertation unless you give written consent. If you choose to be anonymous,

your identity will be concealed in the dissertation under an alpha-numeric code. The Project Director, Dissertation Chair, and you will be the only people who will know the code. The records of this interview will be kept private and stored in a secured file cabinet. At the completion the Project Director's doctoral program and a copy will either be given to you or destroyed by your request. The records include any cassette tapes and/or written notes. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

**Remember, if you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, you can contact the Project Director, Eli S. Suzukovich III at (\*\*\*) \*\*\*-\*\*\*\* or \*\*\*\*\*@\*\*\*\*\*.edu at any time. If you have any questions about being a research subject, you can contact the University of Montana Institutional Review Board chair at (406) 243-6670.**

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above description of the research study. I have been informed of what this research is about, my rights, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that the Project Director, Eli S. Suzukovich III, will answer any future questions. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study and understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent to Use Participant's Name in Dissertation:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ give permission to use my name used in this dissertation and I am aware that I may voluntarily withdraw my name from use in said dissertation at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Date

**Statement of Consent to be Photographed, Audiotape, and/or Videotaped:**

I understand that photographs (audio/video recordings) may be taken during the study. I consent to having my photograph taken, and/or my interview being audio/video recorded. I consent to use of my photograph and/or audio/video in presentations related to this study. I understand that if photographs (audio/video recordings) are used for presentations of any kind, names or other identifying information will not be associated with them. I understand that audio recordings will be destroyed following transcription, and that no identifying information will be included in the transcription.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature Date

## **APPENDIX II:**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND SURVEY TOOLS**

## **Dissertation Interview Questions**

### **The Seen and Unseen: Religion and Identity in the Chicago American Indian Community**

#### **Question Group 1: Demographic Information:**

1. What is your name?
2. What is your tribal affiliation?
3. Where were you born and raised?
4. What is your gender?
5. How old are you?
6. How long have you and/or your family lived in the Chicago area?
7. If you are not from Chicago originally, when did you arrive and what was the reason(s) for coming to Chicago?
8. What is your religious/spiritual affiliation(s)?

#### **Question Group 2:**

**What do community members feel are important aspects and events of their individual, family, and/or tribal cosmological, spiritual, and ceremonial beliefs, traditions, and practices?**

1. How would you define or describe your religious or spiritual beliefs?
2. How do your religious beliefs influence your everyday life, and if so, how?
3. How do you express your religious beliefs?
4. Where do you perform ceremonies?
  - ◆ Do they take place in Chicago?
  - ◆ Do they take place in the Chicago area (ex. suburbs)?
  - ◆ Do they take place in your home community?
  - ◆ Do they take place elsewhere?
5. Who do you perform or practice your beliefs with?
  - ◆ Do you practice with members of your tribe or tribes?
  - ◆ Do you practice with members of other tribes?
  - ◆ Do you practice with non-Indians?
  - ◆ Do you practice with members of your clan or society?
  - ◆ Do you practice with your family?

**Question Group 3: Questions regarding the current state of Religiosity in Chicago:**  
**How does the current community define the religious and spiritual heritage of the Chicago American Indian community as a whole?**

1. What is religion, spirituality, or ceremony like in the Chicago American Indian Community?
  - ◆ How important is it?
  - ◆ What are people's thoughts about it?
2. How does living in Chicago affect on your religious beliefs and practices?
  - ◆ How do you think it affects the community's views and ideas?
  - ◆ What aspects of the Chicago American Indian community contribute or take away from the preservation and practice of religious/spiritual beliefs within the Chicago Indian community?
  - ◆ Do you think the religious practices and beliefs within the community are change and adapt, or do they remain constant and unchanging?
3. Are there any community organizations that help maintain the religious and cultural traditions of the community?

**Question Group 4: Questions for religious/spiritual practitioners and specialists:**

1. How would you define your practice or describe what you do?
  - ◆ When did you begin your particular practice (healer, pipe carrier, clergy, etc...)?
  - ◆ When did you begin working in the Chicago Indian community?
2. How would you describe the religious/spiritual attitude within the Chicago Indian community?

**Question Group 5: Questions for community organization board members and directors:**

1. What role does your organization play in regards to the community?
  - ◆ How long has your organization been in the community?
2. What role does it play in the community's religious or ceremonial life?
  - ◆ How long has it been performing or fulfilling a role in regards to religious activities?
3. How important do you think religion and ceremonialism are in the Chicago Indian community?



**(2007 Community Survey)**  
**The Seen and Unseen:**  
**Religion and Identity in the Chicago American Indian Community**  
(Project # 85-09)  
Eli Suzukovich III, PhD. Candidate  
Dept. of Anthropology, The University of Montana

**Purpose of Survey: Perspectives of Community Gatherings and Events:**

This survey is part of a dissertation project from the University of Montana, Dept. of Anthropology. It is an ethnographic community study focusing on the spiritual and ceremonial aspects of the Chicago American Indian community and their relationship to maintaining tribal identity. The purpose of this survey is to understand how members of the Chicago American Indian Community view public gatherings, ceremonies, and social and religious gathering in the Indian community. The information that will be gathered from this survey will be used to provide quantitative data for the project to understand: 1) how community members view secular and sacred events within the community; 2) if tribal background and/or religious affiliation affects which events and gatherings they attend; and 3) which types of social events and gatherings are attended more than others? For information about this project or survey, please contact Eli at 773-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\* or [eli.s@\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*.edu](mailto:eli.s@*****.edu)

***Please fill in your response (and feel to use the back of the paper if you need to):***

- 1) Age? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Gender? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What is your tribal heritage? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Do you currently live in Chicago or the surrounding area? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) If you were not born in Chicago, where is your home community? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) How long have you or your family lived in Chicago or surrounding area? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) What is your religious or spiritual belief or affiliation? (Ex: Christian, Native American Church, Midéwiwin, Big Drum, Agnostic, Atheist, tribal, etc...) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) If you don't consider yourself religious or follow a particular religion, do you consider yourself spiritual? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) Do you attend community gatherings (powwows, feasts, wakes, masses, meetings, etc...) within the Chicago American Indian community? \_\_\_\_\_. **(If you answered yes, please continue to questions 10-13)**
- 10) Which events or gatherings do you attend?  
Powwows \_\_\_\_ Feasts \_\_\_\_ Religious /Spiritual Services \_\_\_\_ Funerals/Wakes \_\_\_\_ Prayer Circles \_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) How often do you attend these events or gatherings? \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) What do like about attending community events or gatherings? \_\_\_\_\_
- 13) Are there any things that you do not like about community events or gatherings? \_\_\_\_\_

**(2008 Community Survey)**  
**The Seen and Unseen:**  
**Religion and Identity in the Chicago American Indian Community**  
**(Project # 85-09)**  
**Eli Suzukovich III, MA**  
**PhD. Candidate**  
**Dept. of Anthropology**  
**The University of Montana**

**Purpose of Survey:**

This survey is part of a dissertation project from the University of Montana, Dept. of Anthropology. It is an ethnographic community study of the spiritual and ceremonial aspects of the Chicago American Indian community and its relationship to cultural identity. The purpose of this survey is to understand how members of the Chicago American Indian Community view religion and religious practices. The information that will be gathered from this survey will be used to provide quantitative data to understand 1) how is religion and religious practices are viewed by the community as a whole; 2) the connected of religion to people's tribal backgrounds; 3) how religious community members are; 4) the common beliefs within the community; and 5) the role of religion in the maintenance of tribal identity?

**Survey Questions:**

***Please fill in your response:***

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your tribal heritage? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you currently live in Chicago or the surrounding area? \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Were you born in Chicago? \_\_\_\_\_. If not, where is your home community? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How long have you or your family lived in Chicago or surrounding area? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is your religious or spiritual belief or affiliation? (Example: Christian, Muslim, Native American Church, Midewiwin, Big Drum, Agnostic, Atheist, Baha'i, Buddhist, etc...)  
\_\_\_\_\_.
9. If you don't consider yourself religious or follow a particular religion, do you consider yourself spiritual?  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**OVER** →

***Please circle the answer that best fits your opinion:***

10. How would you rate the importance of religion or spiritual belief in your life?

**Very important      Important      Slightly Important      Less important      Not at all**

11. How would you rate the importance of maintaining your tribal identity?

**Very important      Important      Slightly Important      Less important      Not at all**

12. How would you rate the importance of family in maintaining tribal identity?

**Very important      Important      Slightly Important      Less important      Not at all**

13. How would you rate the importance of family in maintaining religious identity or traditions?

**Very important      Important      Slightly Important      Less important      Not at all**

14. How would you rate the importance of friends and social groups in maintaining tribal identity?

**Very important      Important      Slightly Important      Less important      Not at all**

15. How would you rate the importance of community in maintaining religious identity or traditions?

**Very important      Important      Slightly Important      Less important      Not at all**

16. Do you think youth believe that maintaining tribal identity is important?

**Very important      Important      Slightly Important      Less important      Not at all**

17. Do you think youth believe that maintaining a religious identity is important?

**Very important      Important      Slightly Important      Less important      Not at all**

Thank you for your participation and help with this project. If you have any questions, please contact  
Eli S. Suzukovich III at \*\*\*\*\*.com